

Sir Real's

**UNDERGROUND
COMIX CLASSIX**

Andromeda #6

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Stories:

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- 20 - Where Do You Get Those Ideas?
- 22 - The Metrognome
- 39 - Thrust

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- B.P. Ninichol 4-19 (story adaptation)
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- Paul McCusker 4-19(l)
- Paul Rivoche 20-21(a)
- Don Marshall 39-50(a)

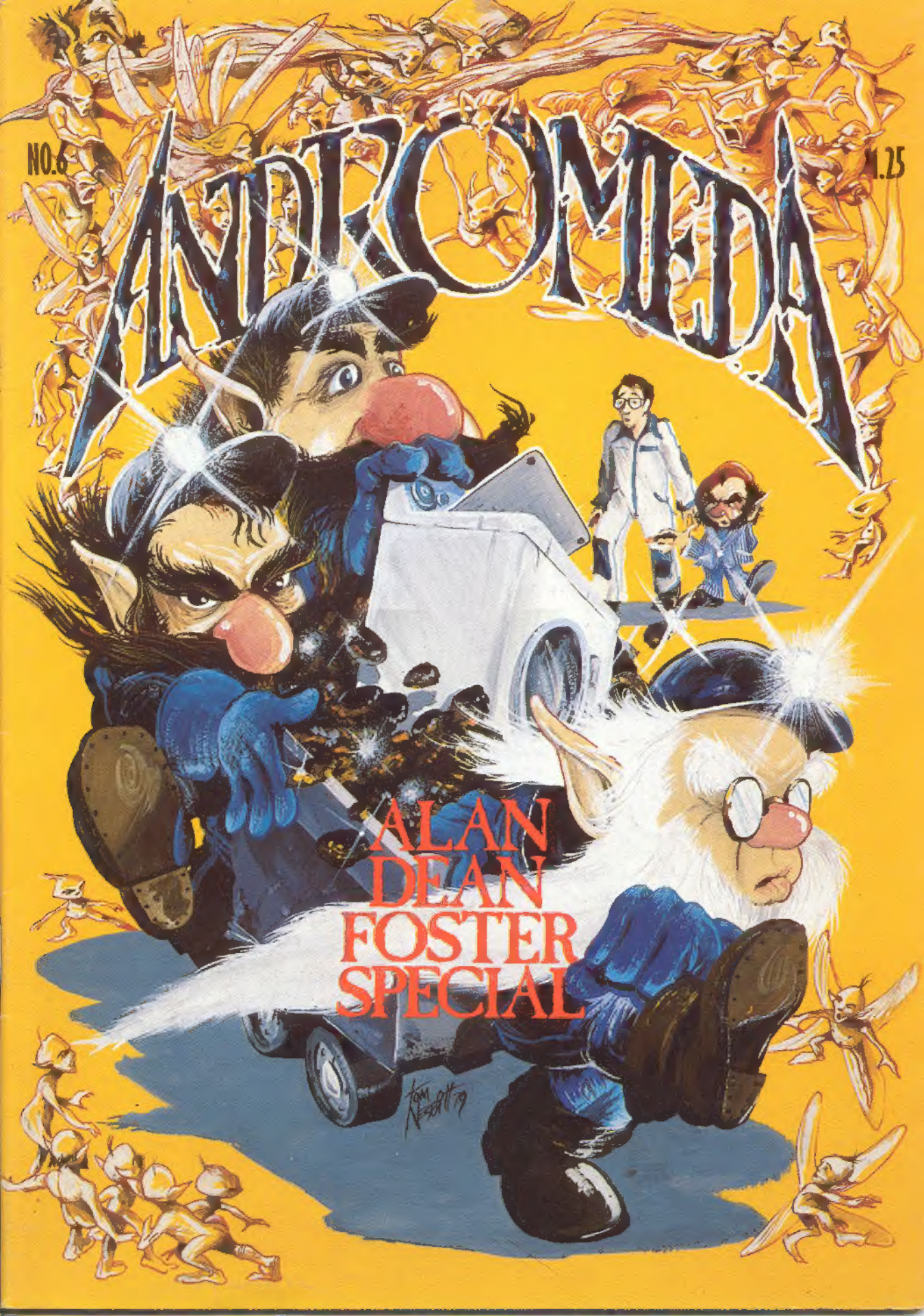
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ANDROMEDA

ALAN
DEAN
FOSTER
SPECIAL

Tom
Rees



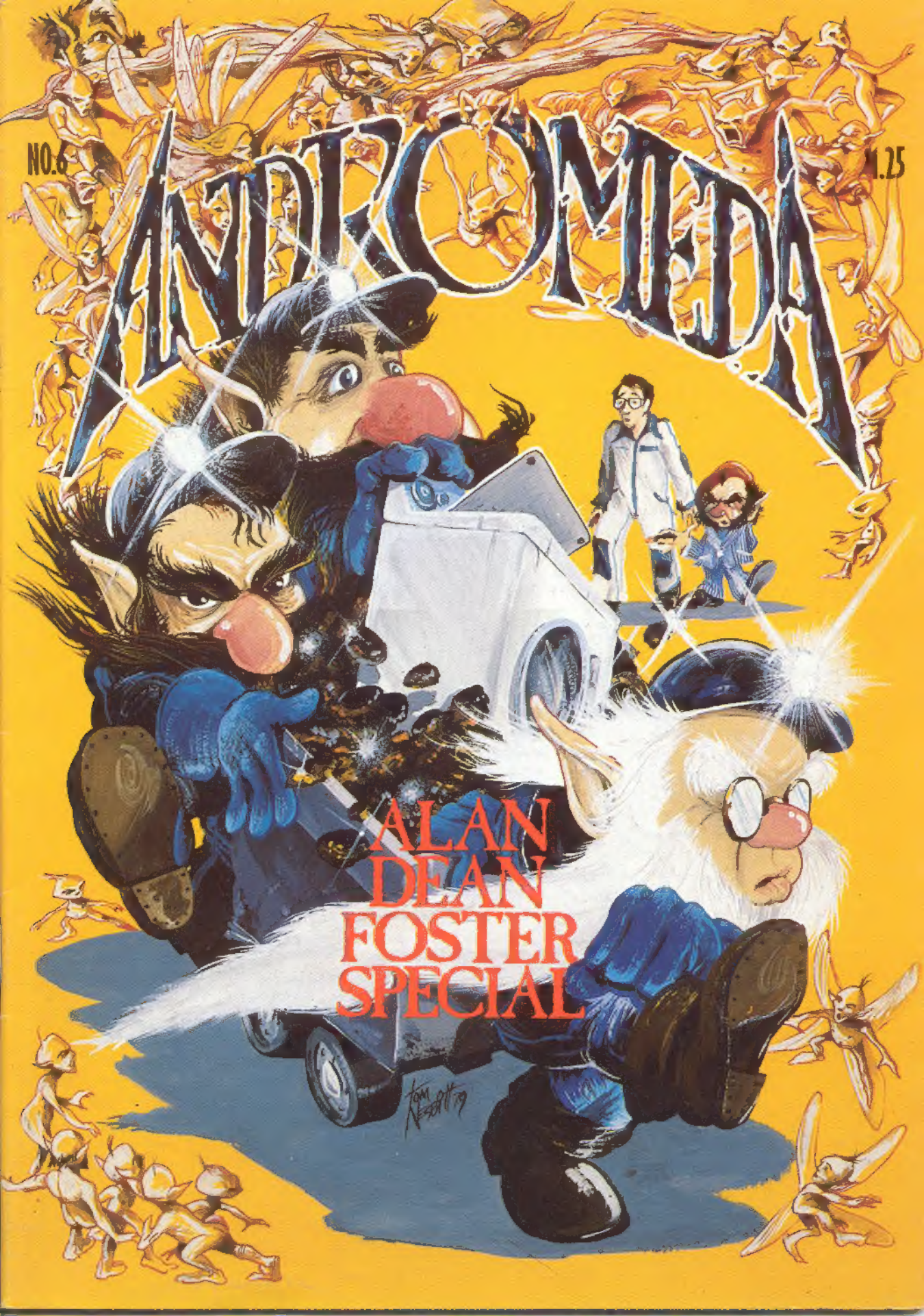
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ALAN DEAN FOSTER

Born in New York City in 1946, Foster was raised in Los Angeles, California. After receiving a bachelor's degree in Political Science and a Master of Fine Arts in Motion Pictures from UCLA in 1968-9, he worked for two years as a public relations copywriter in a small Studio City, Calif. firm.

His writing career began when August Derleth bought a long letter of Foster's in 1968 and published it as a short story in his biannual **Arkham Collector Magazine**. Sales of short fiction to other magazines followed. His first try at a novel, **The Tar-Aiym Krang**, was published by Ballantine Books in 1972.

In addition to the **Arkham Collector**, Foster's sometimes humorous, occasionally poignant, but always entertaining short stories have appeared in such magazines as **Analog**, **If**, **Galaxy**, **Fantasy & Fiction**, **Galileo**, **Isaac Asimov's**, **Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine**, **Adam**, **Art & Story**, and **COQ**, as well as in original anthologies and several "Best of the Year" collections. A collection, **With Friends Like These**, was published by Del Rey books in 1977.

Much of Foster's longer work takes place within the framework of a future society known as the Universe of the Commonwealth, where mankind has forged a semi-symbiotic relationship with a race of insects, the Thranx. In addition to publication in the United States and the rest of the English-speaking world, these novels of high adventure have been translated into Dutch, German, Italian, Spanish and Flemish. Foster is also the author of several movie novelizations such as **Dark Star** and **Luana**, besides the ten volume **Star Trek Log** series. The latter have sold over 1 1/2 million copies in the U.S. alone. Among his other works are talking records, radio and screenplays, the sequel novel to the film **Star Wars (Splinter Of The Mind's Eye)**, and the story for **Star Trek Two—The Movie**.

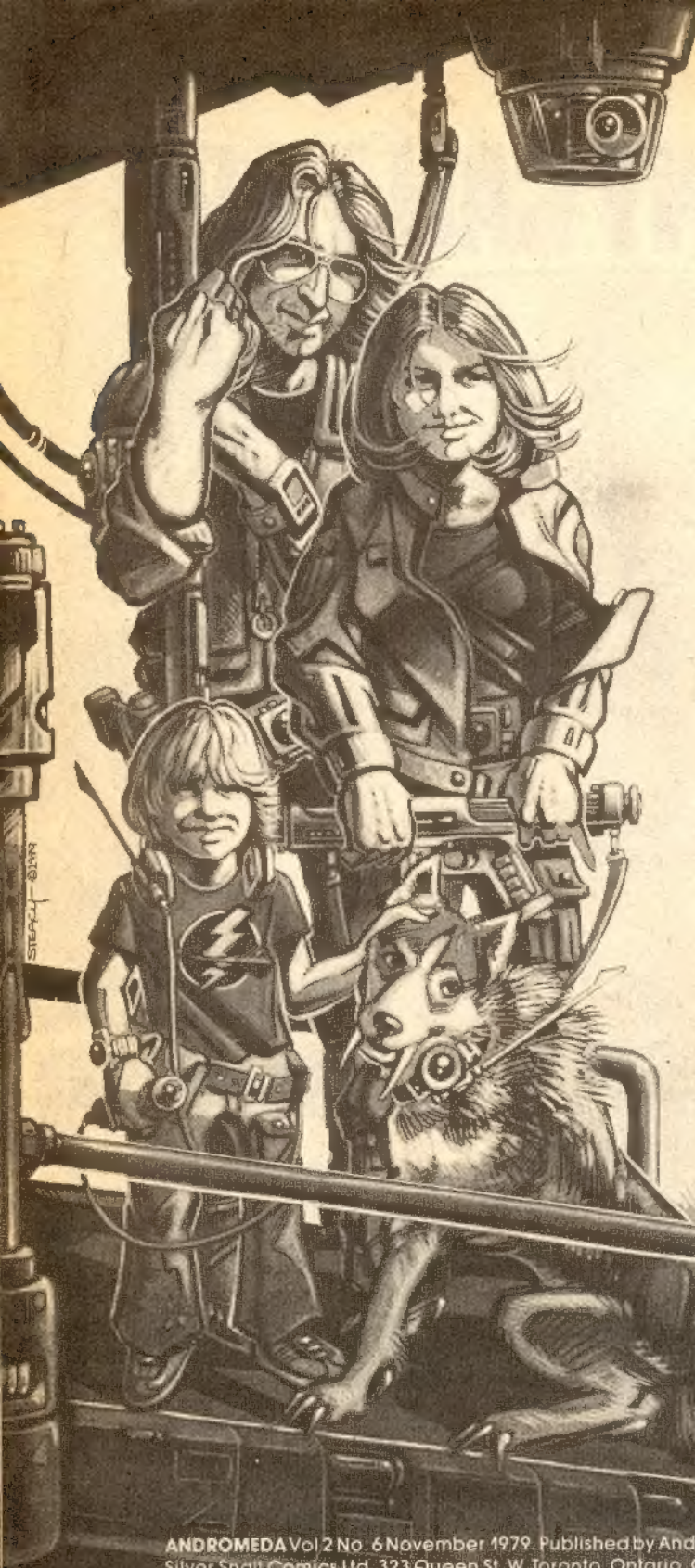
Though restricted (for now) to one world, Foster's love for the far-away and exotic has led him to travel extensively through Asia and the isles of the Pacific, including a sojourn in Tahiti where he lived with the family of a local gendarme. Besides traveling he

enjoys both classical and rock music, old films (particularly animation and documentary), basketball, body surfing, and karate. He has taught screenwriting, literature and film history at **UCLA** and Los Angeles City College.

Currently he resides in Big Bear Lake, California with his wife JoAnn (who was raised forty miles from Robert E. Howard's home town of Cross Plains, Texas). She is reputed to have the only extant recipe for Barbarian Cream Pie. They share a many-roomed home with three cats (Saturn, Mittens and Orca), three dogs (Sasha, Pepper and Valentine), two hundred house plants who assisted in the writing of **Midworld**, assorted renegade coyotes and raccoons, and the ensorceled chair of the nefarious Dr. John Dee.

Foster is presently at work on several new novels and film projects. . . .





There really isn't too much to say about this issue, it explains itself quite well.

Thank you to Mr. Alan Dean Foster for allowing us to put this issue together and for his kind suggestions.

A very special thanks to Virginia Kidd who was so helpful from the beginning.

All stories by
Alan Dean Foster

METROGnome

Illustrated by Tom Nesbitt

WHY JOHNNY CAN'T SPEED

Illustrated by Peter Hsu

WHERE DO YOU GET THOSE IDEAS?

Illustrated by Paul Rivoche

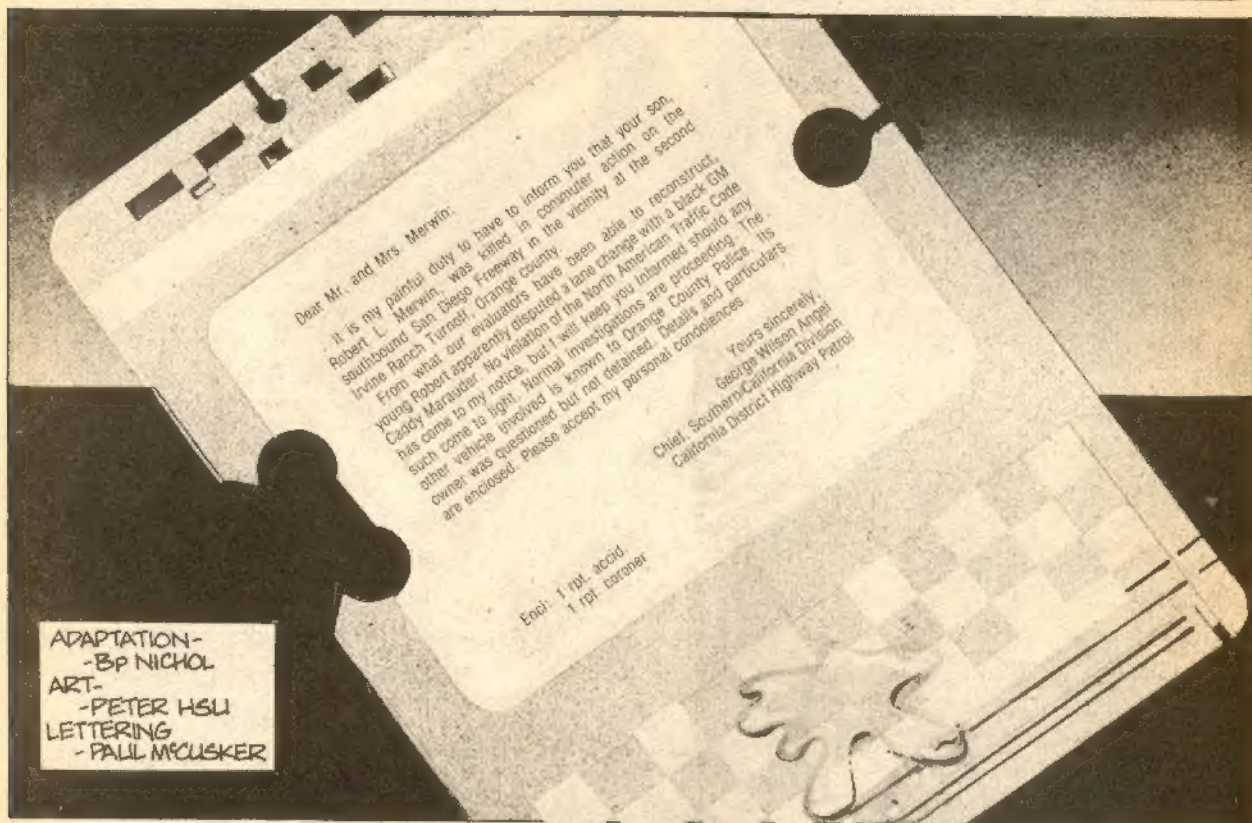
THRUST

Illustrated by Don Marshall

Cover by Tom Nesbitt
Contents Page by Ken Steacy
Back Cover by Peter Hsu

ANDROMEDA Vol 2 No. 6 November 1979. Published by Andromeda Publications. Owned and operated by Silver Snail Comics Ltd. 323 Queen St. W. Toronto, Ontario, Canada. M5V 2A7. Ron Van Leeuwen and Dean Motter associate editors. Cover - 1979 Tom Nesbitt. Contents Page - 1979 Ken Steacy. Back cover - 1979 Peter Hsu. All stories - 1979 Alan Dean Foster, used with the kind permission of his agent Virginia Kidd. All illustrative material is - 1979 by the respective artists. All rights reserved. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. No actual persons living or dead are intended or should be inferred. Founding publisher Bill Paul. Distributed by Firefly Books, 2 Essex Ave. Unit 5, Thornhill, Ontario, Canada. Printed in Canada.

ALAN DEAN FOSTER'S WHY JOHNNY CAN'T SPEED



ADAPTATION-
-BP NICHOL
ART-
-PETER HSU
LETTERING
-PAUL MCCLUSKER



GODDAMN IT
MYRTLE
I TOLD HIM!
I TOLD HIM!

WHATTA YOU TELL A KID
LIKE THAT, MYRT?
HOW DO YOU GET
THROUGH TO HIM?



'LOOK, SON. IF YOU INSIST
ON DRIVING ALL THE WAY
TO DIEGO BY YOURSELF,
AT LEAST TAKE THE PONTIAC!
HAVE SOME **SENSE**. I TOLD
HIM! I DON'T KNOW
WHAT'S WITH THE KIDS
THESE DAYS, HON. YOU'D
THINK HE'D LISTEN TO ME
JUST THIS ONCE, WOULDN'T
YOU? ME, WHO ONCE
DROVE ALL THE WAY FROM
INDIANAPOLIS TO L.A. AND
WAS CHALLENGED ONLY
TWICE ON THE WAY—**ONLY
TWICE**, MYRT. BUT NO, HE
HADDABE A **BIG SHOT**!
'LISTEN DAD, THIS IS
SOMETHING I'VE GOT TO
WORK OUT FOR MYSELF,
WITH MY OWN CAR.' HE
TELLS ME! I KNEW HE'D
HAVE TROUBLE IN THAT
VW AND I OFTEN TOLD
HIM SO, TOO.

BUT NO, ALL HE COULD
THINK OF WAS TO SAY,
'POPS, THE WORST THAT
CAN HAPPEN IS I'VE GOTTA
OUTMANEUVER SOME OTHER
CAR, RIGHT? YOU'VE SEEN
THE WAY THAT BUG
CORNERS, HAVEN'T YOU,
HUH? AND IF I GET
INTO A TOUGH SCRAPE,
ANY OTHER VW. ON THE
ROAD IS BOUND BY
OATH TO SUPPORT ME,
—IN **MOST ACTIONS**
ANYWAY.'



I DON'T KNOW EITHER,
DEAR. I STILL DON'T
UNDERSTAND WHY HE
HAD TO DRIVE DOWN
THERE. WHY COULDN'T
HE HAVE TAKEN
THE **TRANS**, FRANK?
WHY?

OH, YOU KNOW WHY. WHAT
WOULD HIS '**FRIENDS**' HAVE
SAID? 'HERE'S BOBBY MERWIN,
TOO SCARED TO DRIVE HIS
OWN ROD.' AND THAT SORT OF
CRUD. STILL FELT HE HAD TO
PROVE HIMSELF A MAN, THE
IDOT! HE'D ALREADY SOLOED
ON THE FREEWAYS—WHY DID
HE FEEL THE NEED TO TRY A
CROSS-COUNTRY EXPEDITION?
BUT DAMN IT, IF HE HAD TO
DISPLAY HIS GUTS, WHY
COULDN'T HE DAVE DONE SO
IN THE BIG CAR? NOT EVEN
A PROFESSIONALLY
CUSTOMIZED VW CAN MOUNT
MUCH STUFF.

AND ON TOP OF EVERYTHING
ELSE, YOU'D THINK HE'D HAVE
HAD THE SENSE TO SHY OFF
THAT KIND OF AN ARGUMENT?
HE HAD DRIVER'S TRAINING!
WHO EVER HEARD OF A VW
DISPUTING POSITION WITH A
CAD-A MARAUDER, NO LESS!
WHERE WERE HIS '**FRIENDS**,
HUH? I WARNED HIM ABOUT
THE LIGHT STRETCHES
BETWEEN HERE AND
DIEGO, WHERE FLOW IS
LIGHT, HELP IS MORE THAN
A HORNBLAST AWAY
AND SOME PSYCHO CAN
SURPRISE YOU FROM
BEHIND AN ON-RAMP!



YOU KNOW WHAT
I HAVE TO DO
NOW, I SUPPOSE?

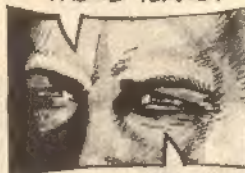


BOB WAS TAKING THAT GIFT TO A FRIEND IN DIEGO. I'M BOUND TO SEE THAT IT'S DELIVERED.



I DON'T SUPPOSE...

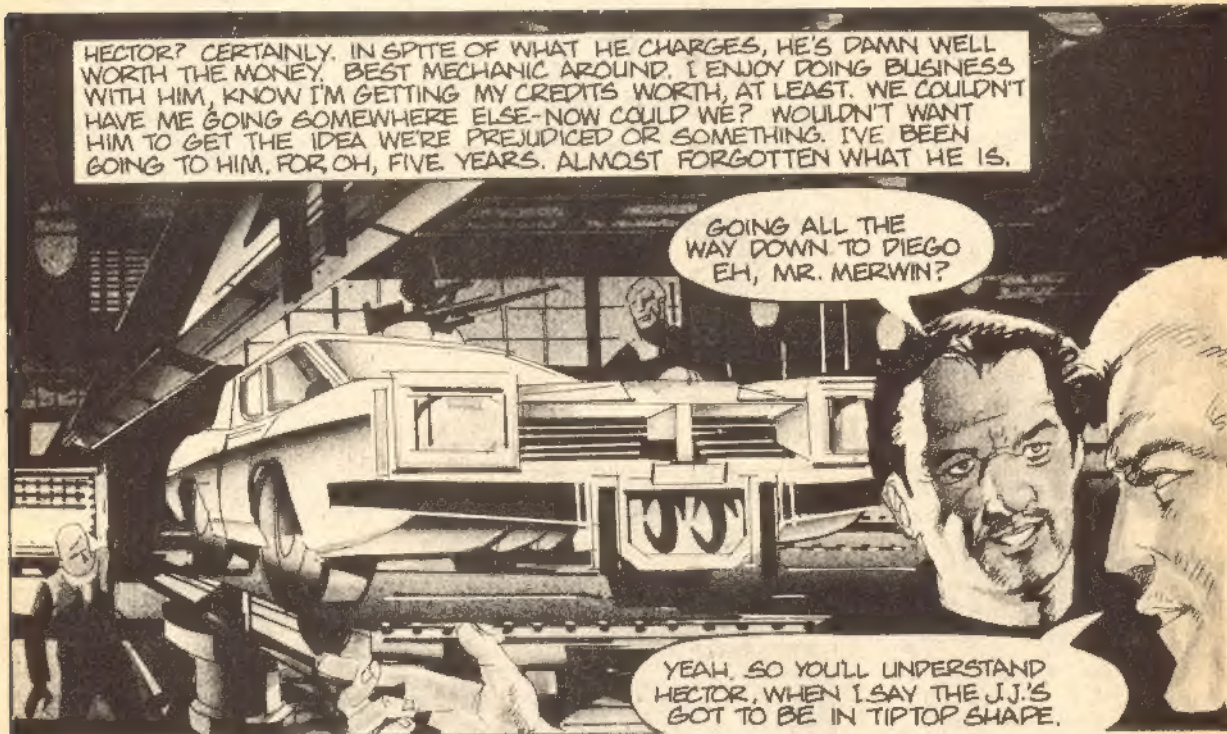
NO, HON, I'M TAKING IT DOWN MYSELF. I REFUSE TO SHIP IT AND I CERTAINLY WON'T RIDE THE TRANS. NOT AFTER ALL THESE YEARS.



NO, I'M GOING DOWN THE SAME WAY BOB WENT, BY THE SAME ROUTE. I'LL HAVE THE J.J. TUNED FIRST THOUGH.



I SUPPOSE YOU'LL AT LEAST TAKE IT IN TO...



HECTOR? CERTAINLY. IN SPITE OF WHAT HE CHARGES, HE'S DAMN WELL WORTH THE MONEY. BEST MECHANIC AROUND. I ENJOY DOING BUSINESS WITH HIM, KNOW I'M GETTING MY CREDITS WORTH, AT LEAST. WE COULDN'T HAVE ME GOING SOMEWHERE ELSE-NOW COULD WE? WOULDN'T WANT HIM TO GET THE IDEA WE'RE PREJUDICED OR SOMETHING. I'VE BEEN GOING TO HIM, FOR OH, FIVE YEARS. ALMOST FORGOTTEN WHAT HE IS.

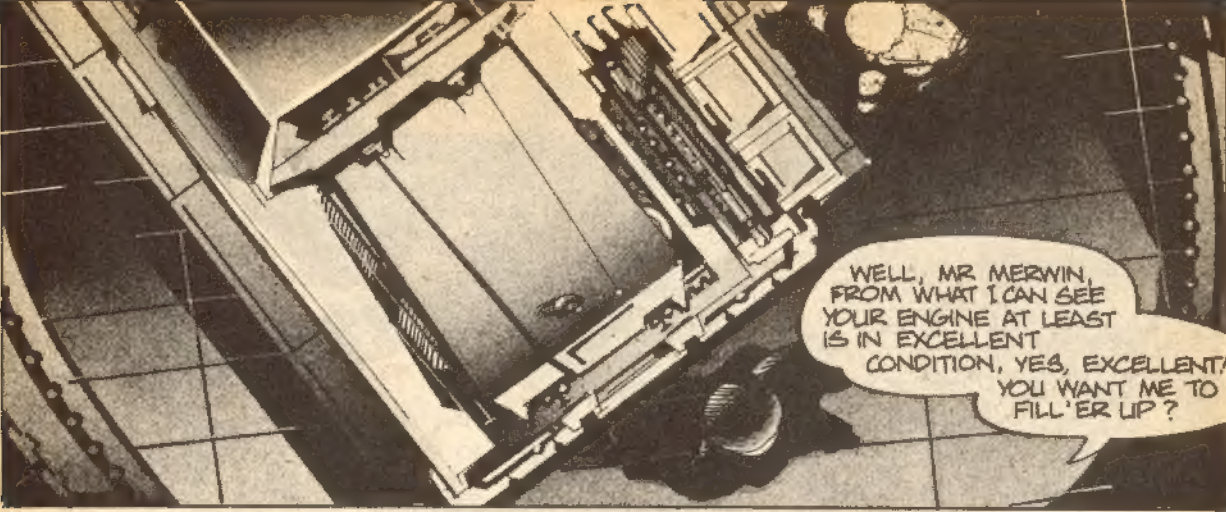
GOING ALL THE WAY DOWN TO DIEGO EH, MR. MERWIN?

YEAH, SO YOU'LL UNDERSTAND HECTOR, WHEN I SAY THE J.J.'S GOT TO BE IN TIPTOP SHAPE.

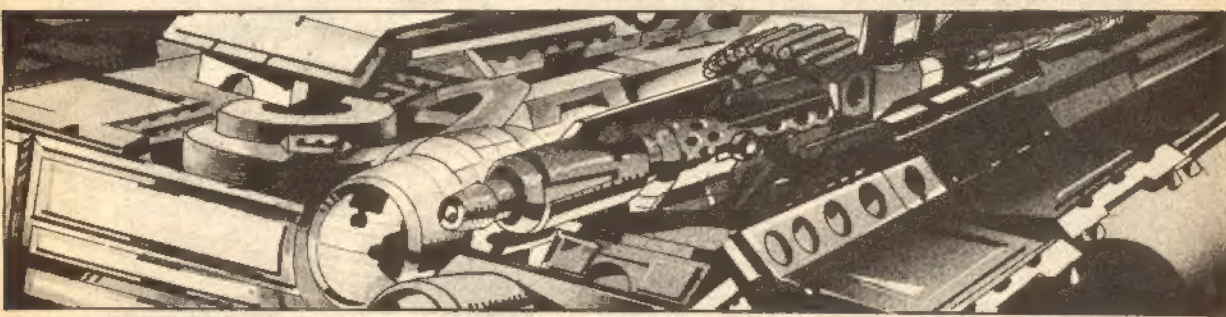


CIERTAMENTE! YOU WANT TO OPEN HER UP, PLEASE?

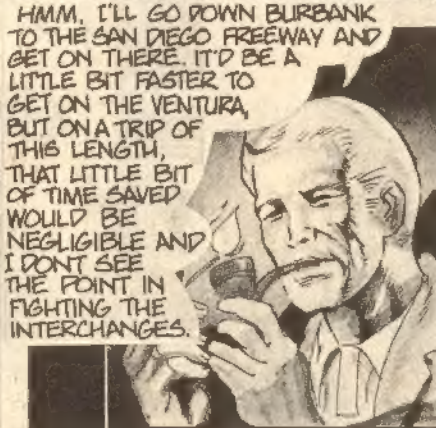




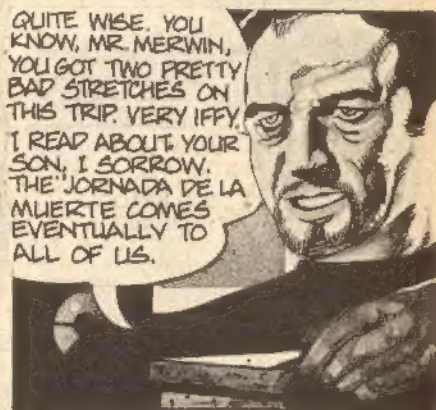
WELL, MR MERWIN,
FROM WHAT I CAN SEE
YOUR ENGINE AT LEAST
IS IN EXCELLENT
CONDITION, YES, EXCELLENT!
YOU WANT ME TO
FILL'ER UP?



IF I
MAY ASK, HOW
DO YOU PLAN
TO GO?



HMM, I'LL GO DOWN BURBANK
TO THE SAN DIEGO FREEWAY AND
GET ON THERE. IT'D BE A
LITTLE BIT FASTER TO
GET ON THE VENTURA,
BUT ON A TRIP OF
THIS LENGTH,
THAT LITTLE BIT OF
TIME SAVED
WOULD BE
NEGLECTIBLE AND
I DON'T SEE
THE POINT IN
FIGHTING THE
INTERCHANGES.



QUITE WISE. YOU
KNOW, MR. MERWIN,
YOU GOT TWO PRETTY
BAD STRETCHES ON
THIS TRIP. VERY IFFY.
I READ ABOUT YOUR
SON, I SORROW.
THE 'JORNADA DE LA
MUERTE COMES
EVENTUALLY TO
ALL OF US.



COULDN'T BE HELPED, BOB DIDN'T
REALIZE WHAT WAS - WHAT HE WAS
GETTING INTO, THAT'S ALL. I BLAME
MYSELF, TOO, BUT WHAT COULD I DO?
HE WAS EIGHTEEN AND BY LAW
THERE WASN'T ANYTHING I COULD
DO TO HOLD HIM BACK.

HE SIMPLY
TOOK ON MORE
THAN HE
COULD HANDLE.



A CAD
WASN'T
IT?



IT WAS!

WHAT ARE YOU
GIVING ME-EXPLOSIVES
OR ARMOUR-PIERCING?

MIXED!

BOTH, ALTERNATING SEQUENCE. TRUE,
IT'S MORE EXPENSIVE, BUT AFTER ALL,
YOUR SON'S CAR WAS DESTROYED
BY A MARAUDER-A BLACK ONE.

YES, THAT'S
RIGHT. HOW DID
YOU FIND OUT?

OH, AMONG THE TRADE
WORD GETS PASSED ALONG.
I KNOW OF THIS
PARTICULAR VEHICLE,
I BELIEVE. OWNER
DOES A LOT OF
HIS OWN WORK.
I UNDERSTAND.

THAT'S TOUGH TO
TANGLE WITH MR.
MERWIN. MIGHT YOU
BE THINKING OF..

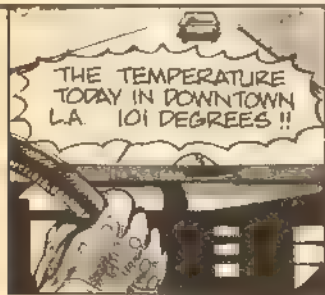
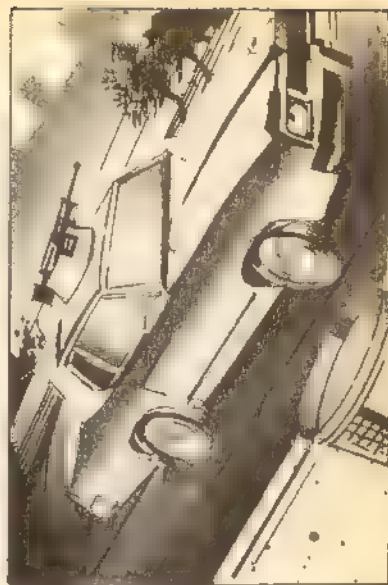
NEVER KNOW WHO YOU'LL
BUMP INTO ON THE ROAD
THESE DAYS, HECTOR.
I'VE NEVER BEEN ONE TO
RUN FROM A DOG-FIGHT.

I DID NOT MEAN TO
IMPLY THAT YOU WOULD.
WE ALL KNOW YOUR DRIVER-
COMBAT RECORD, MR. MERWIN.
THERE ARE NOT ALL THAT
MANY ACES LIVING
IN THE VALLEY.

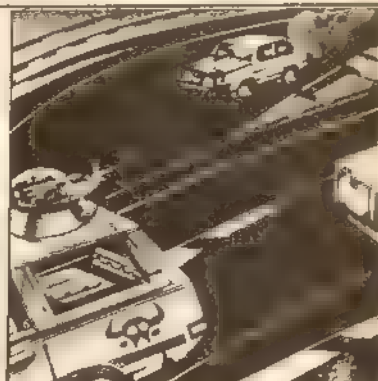
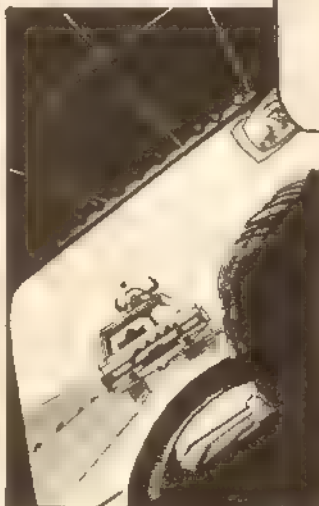
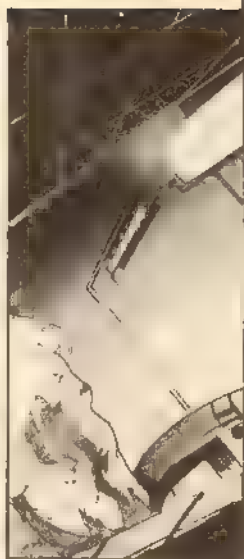
YES, WELL YOU WATCH YOURSELF,
MR. MERWIN. A MARAUDER IS BAD
NEWS STRAIGHT FROM THE FACTORY.
PROPERLY CUSTOMIZED, IT COULD
MOUNT ENOUGH STUFF TO TAKE
ON A GREYHOUND BUSNIGHT.

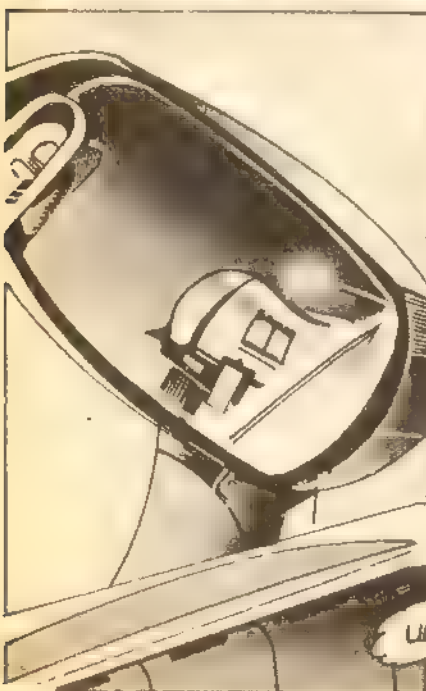
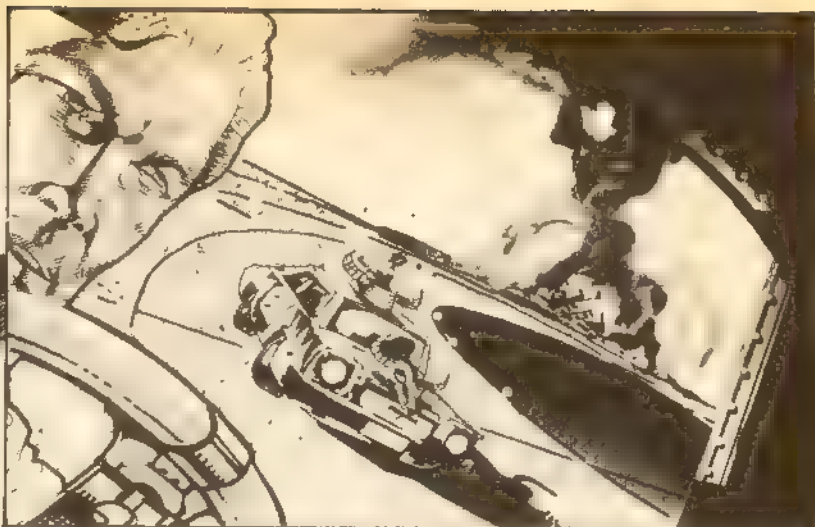
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME HECTOR.
I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF.
BESIDES, THE J.J. MOUNTS A
FEW SURPRISES OF HER OWN.

Mass Trans required and still requires a lot of money. One way in which the governments involved (meaning those of most industrial, developed nations) went about obtaining the necessary amounts was to cut back the expensive motorized forces needed to regulate the far flung freeway systems. As the cutbacks increased it gradually became accepted custom among the remaining overworked patrols to allow drivers to settle their own disputes. This custom was finalized by the Supreme Court's handing down of the famous *Brivervs. Matthews and the State of Texas* decision of '79, in which it was ruled that all attempts to regulate interstate, nonstop highway systems were in direct violation of the First Amendment.

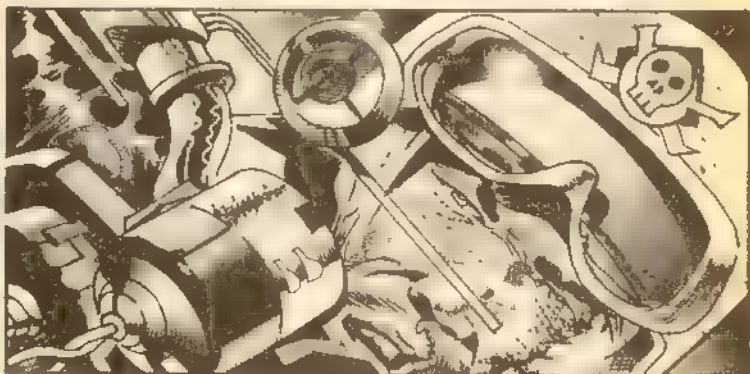
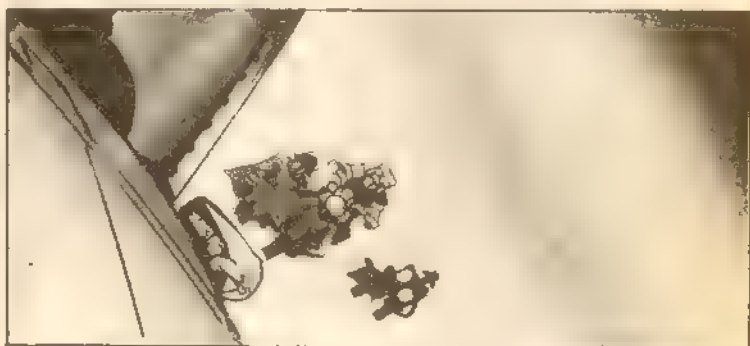


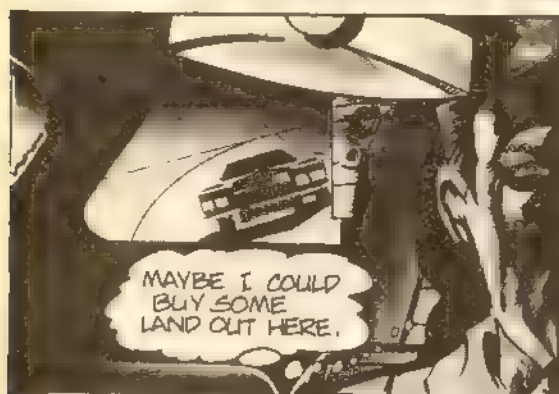
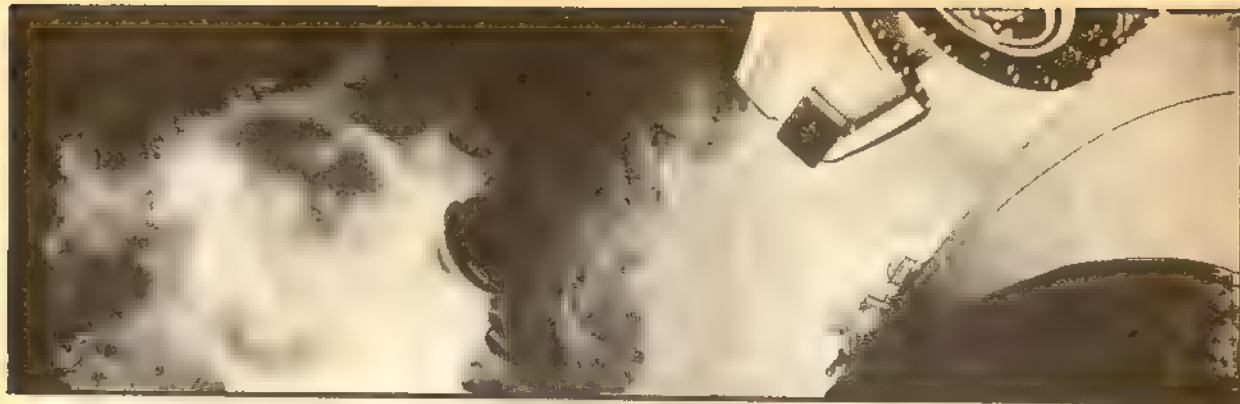
Any motorist who didn't feel up to potential arguments was provided a safe, quiet alternative means of transportation in the new Mass Trans systems, most of which ran down the center and sides of the familiar freeway routes, high above the frantic traffic. Benefits were immediate. Less pollution from even the fine turbine steam-electric engines of the private autos, an end to many downtown parking problems in the big cities—and more. For the first time since their inception the freeways, even at rush hour, became negotiable at speeds close to those envisioned by their builders. And psychiatrists began to advise driving as excellent therapy for persons afflicted with violent or even homicidal instincts.

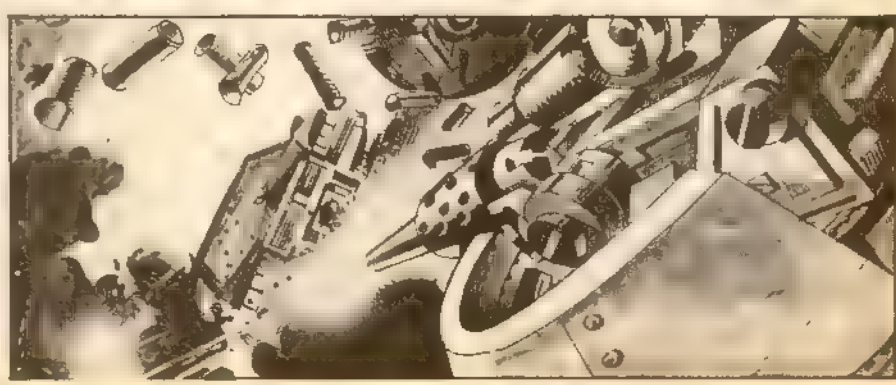
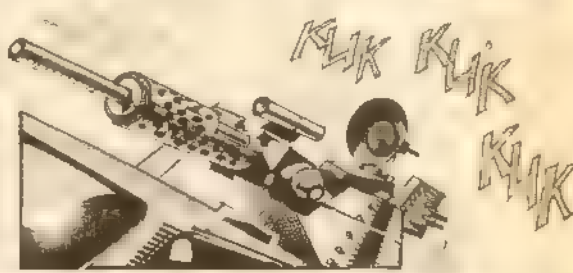
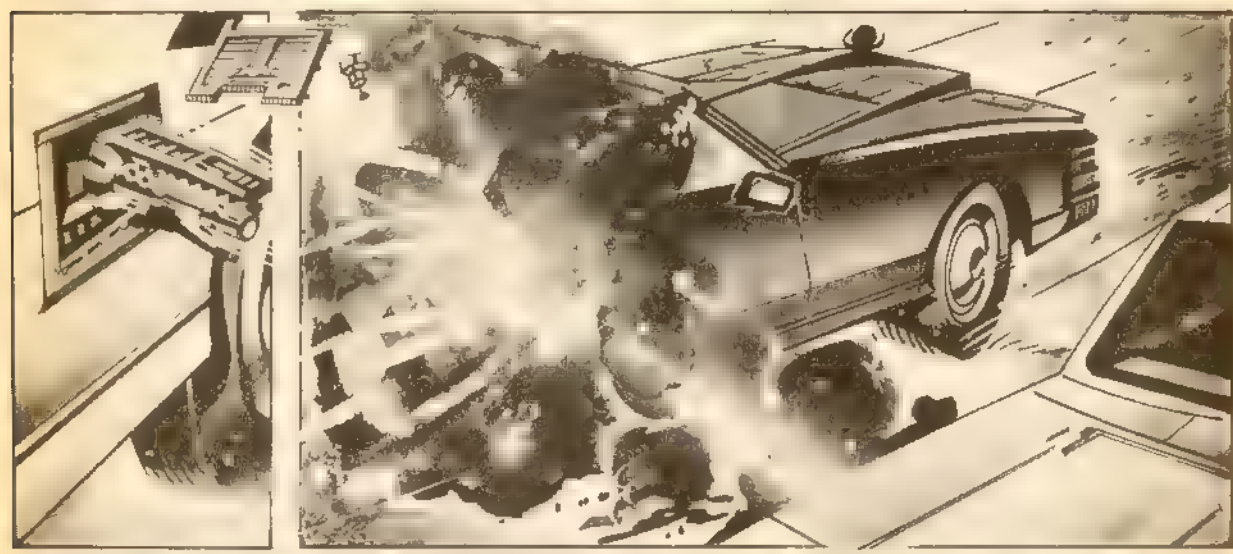
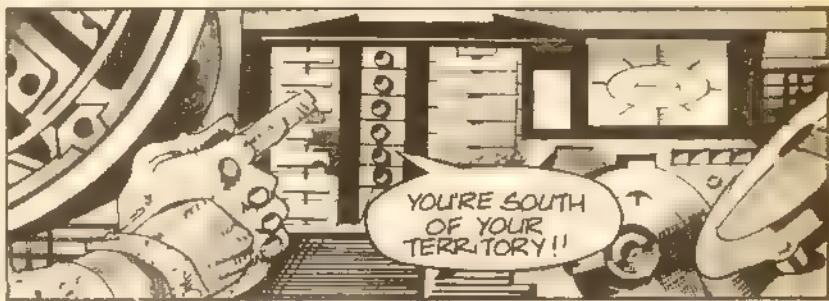




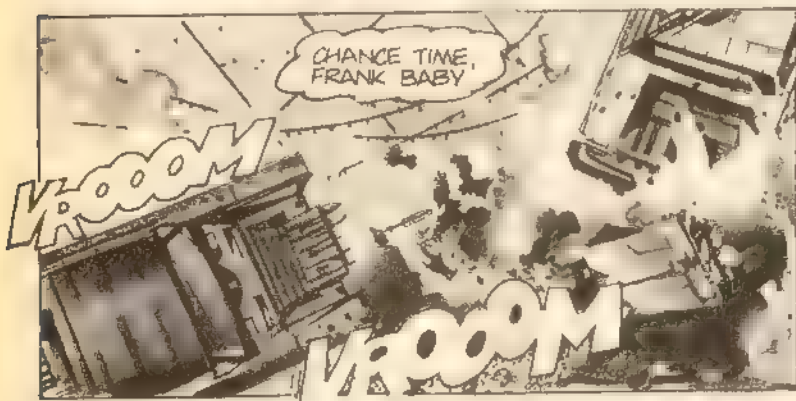


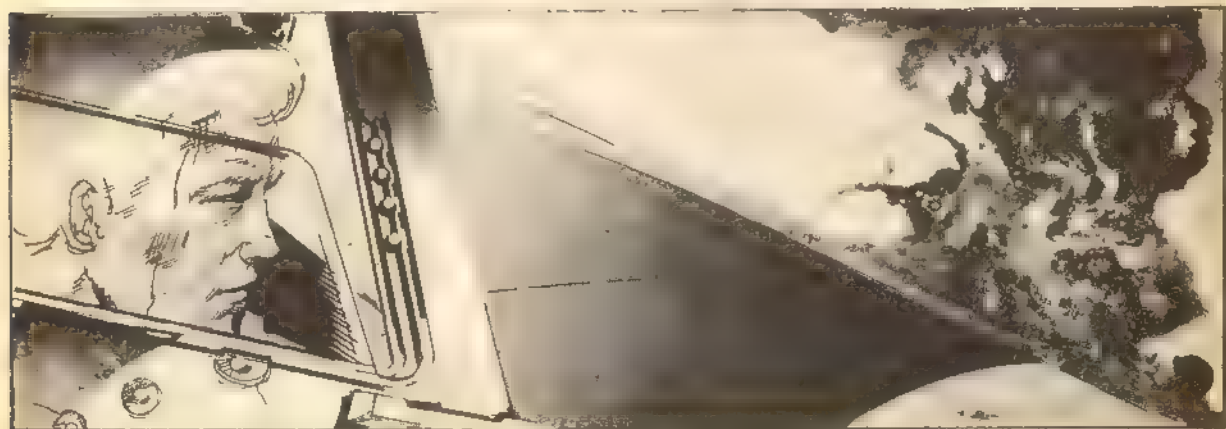
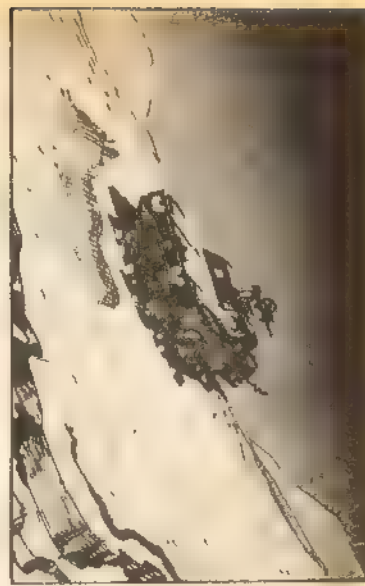


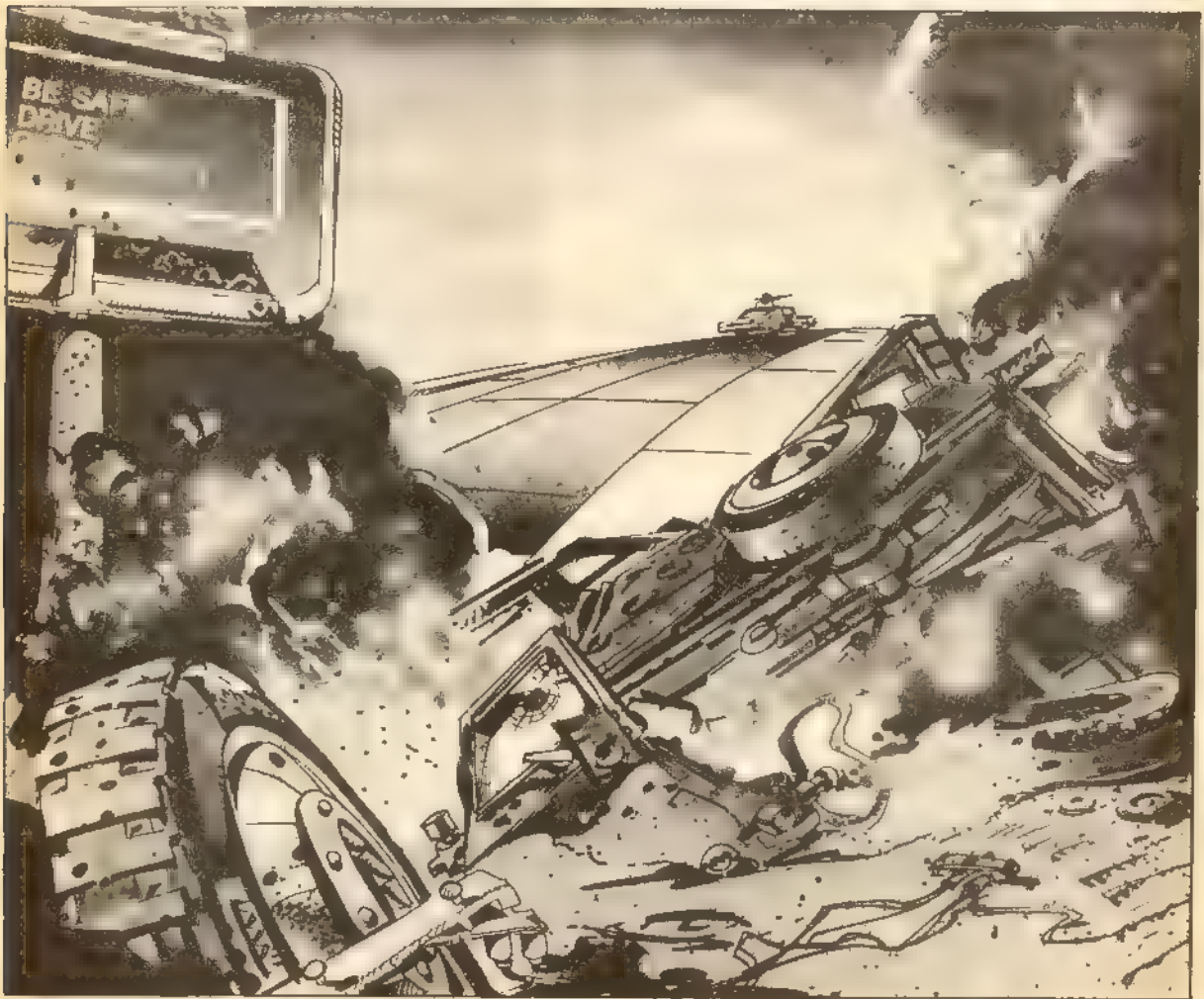
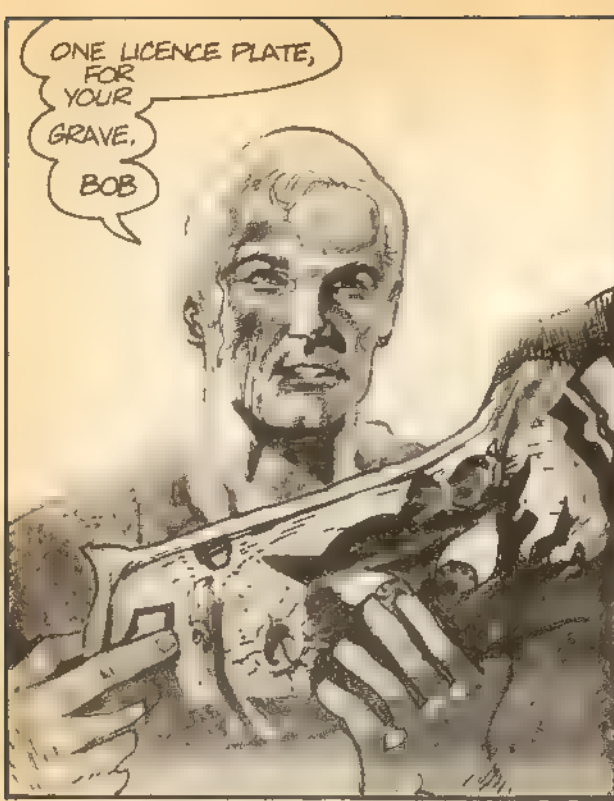












DEDICATION: SOUND EFFECTS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED TO ALEX TOTTH.

WHERE DO YOU GET THOSE IDEAS?

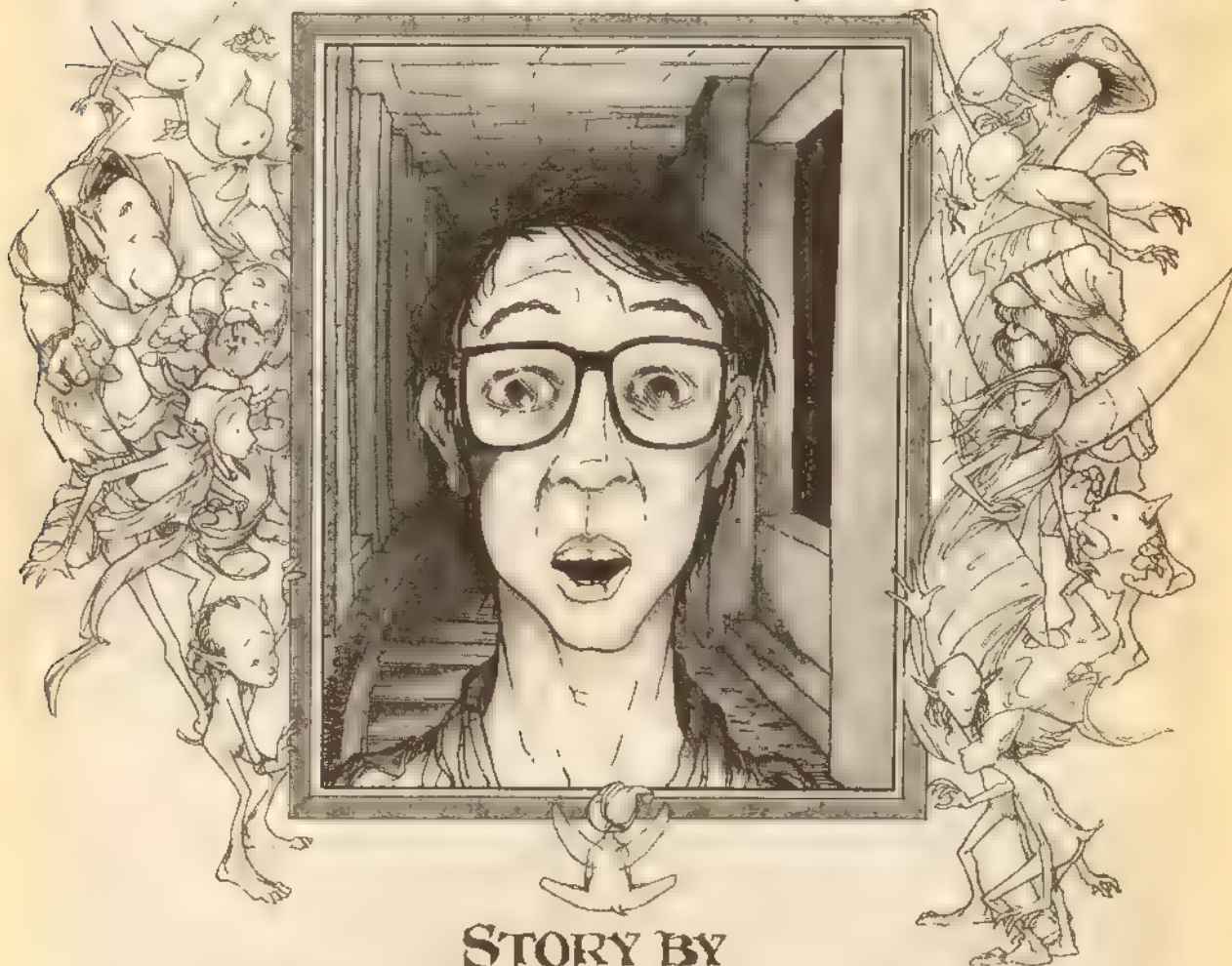
You ask me where do I get my ideas and I tell you I don't know
But
It doesn't matter because if I could explain it I wouldn't get
Them and therein lies a devastating paradox
Because
(Are you listening?)
You see in my outside self I am only a beetle making picayune
Skritch marks on the underside of a pebble
But
Inside I am a bottomless chasm of conceptualizing
And
I tell you that the thoughts oh the thoughts I have are a beach
Ten thousand miles long
But
All I ever will be able to write for you could be represented by
One grain of sand on that beach
And
That is what devastates me
Because
I want to share it all, all, all with you
I want you to swim in the ocean of my inside self
But
All I'll ever be able to put down on paper is to my thoughts no
More than an ant's pee is to a tsunami
(Can you understand?)
That though I'm doing my best for you I'm sick and sorry inside
Myself
Because
I know that if every man and woman and child on this earth had
An instrument to play that band would not be big enough to play
The song I want to sing to you
And
So you must excuse me if I stare blankly into space when you are
Talking to me or if I ignore you in the street when you greet me
Because
I am not being rude or indifferent
I am only trying to do it for you, my friends
So you see
If I would rather not talk about the weather with you it is
Because
I hear in my raging imagination story sounds that are the composite
To me of every thunder that ever rolled over this poor world
(Are you paying attention?)
And
Though there be no word on my lips there is
A shrieking in the blood
So please try to understand when I say that I've always known that
No man is an island
Because
All who write science-fiction are pocket universes and when you
Ask that question of us we cannot answer because we cannot analyze
A bipedal cosmos.
I have tried to make you see
(Do you see, you happy-poor deprived friends whom I love?)
That I cannot tell you where I get my ideas
Because
They sweep out of the vast void darkness that howls in me like the
Wind above the treeline and try to break through the smooth
Cool granite of my frail humanness and I am sorry, sorry but
There is only a very tiny crack in that wall
Please
Be patient.
Try to grasp what I'm telling you.
I've been as clear and polite as I can
But
To explain where I get my ideas from would be like trying to
Describe the texture of God's epidermis
So
I can only tell you they come
THEY COME, GODDAMMIT, THEY COME, AND THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT!
And
You will nod and say, "Yes, I do understand"
But
I know you don't and never will and never can
So all I can do is sigh and say I've tried my best to explain the
Impossible and might as well have tried to vivisection a quark
Just please don't interrupt me with the question too often
I have mountains to move.







THE METROGNOME



STORY BY
ALAN DEAN FOSTER

ILLUSTRATION BY
T. NESBITT



HARLIE DIMSDALE STARED AT THE MAN IN FRONT OF HIM. EVEN UNDER ORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES (**HARLIE DIMSDALE** WOULD HAVE

STARED AT THE MAN IN FRONT OF HIM. HOWEVER, **THIS** CONFRONTATION WAS TAKING PLACE IN THE LOWEST LEVELS OF THE 52ND STREET-BRONX SUBWAY LINE, A GOOD MANY METERS BENEATH THE HYSTERICAL SURFACE OF MANHATTAN. IT WAS JUST SHORT OF PREORDAINED THAT **CHARLIE DIMSDALE** WOULD STARE AT THE MAN IN FRONT OF HIM.

THE MAN IN FRONT OF **CHARLIE DIMSDALE** STOOD SLIGHTLY OVER A **METER HIGH**. HE WAS BROAD OUT OF ALL PROPORTION IN SELECTED PLACES. HIS **HEAD**, ESPECIALLY, WAS EVEN **LARGER** THAN THAT OF A NORMAL-SIZED MAN. ITS MOST NOTABLE FEATURE WAS A **PROBOSCS** THAT WOULD BE FLATTERED BY THE APPELLATION **BULBOUS**. THIS REMARKABLE PROTUBERANCE WAS BORDERED BY A PAIR OF HUGE **JET-BLACK EYES** THAT HAD BENEATH BLACK EYEBROWS A KODIAK BEAR WOULD HAVE BEEN PROUD OF. TWO **ENORMOUS FLOPPY EARS**, THE SHAPE AND COLOUR OF DRIED APRICOTS, FLUTTERED SIDEWAYS FROM THE HEAD, THE SPAN A TRULY IMPRESSIVE SIGHT.

THE PATE ITSELF WAS AS BALD AND ROUND AS THE BOTTOM OF A **CHINA TEACUP**. A GOOD PORTION OF IT WAS COVERED BY A JAUNTY **RED BERET**, SET AT A RAKISH ANGLE TO THE LEFT. HUGE **BLACK MUTTONCHOP** WHISKERS RAMBLED LIKE A GIANT CATERPILLAR ACROSS HIS FACE.

ARMS THAT WERE TOO LONG FOR THE SHORT TORSO ENDED IN THICK, STUBBY FINGERS. BLACK HAIR, WELL CULTIVATED, GREW THERE IN PROFUSION. IN ADDITION TO THE BERET, HE WORE A **DOUBLE-BREASTED PINSTRIPE JACKET** WITH MATCHING TROUSERS. HIS **BLACK OXFORDS** WERE IMMACULATELY POLISHED.



HAD SUCH A CONFRONTATION OCCURRED ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD WITH AN APPROPRIATE **DIMSDALE-SUBSTITUTE**, IT IS LIKELY THAT SAID **DIMSDALE-SUBSTITUTE** WOULD HAVE FAINTED QUICKLY AWAY. **CHARLIE DIMSDALE**, HOWEVER, MERELY GULPED AND TOOK A STEP BACKWARDS.

AFTER ALL, THIS WAS **NEW YORK**.

THE LITTLE MAN PUT HIS HIRSUITE HANDS ON HIS HIPS AND STARED BACK AT **CHARLIE** WITH UNDISGUISED DISGUST.

"WELL, YOU'VE **SEEN ME**. NOW WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO **DO** ABOUT IT?"

"**SEEN YOU? DO?** LOOK MISTER, I'M ONLY...

MY NAME'S **CHARLES DIMSDALE**. I'M SECOND ASSISTANT INSPECTOR TO THE THE (UNDER-COMMISSIONER FOR SUBWAY MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR. THERE'S A MISALIGNED TRACK DOWN HERE. WE'VE HAD TO MAKE **THREE CONSECUTIVE COMPUTER REROUTINGS UP TOP** (THIS WAS OFFICIAL SLANG OF COURSE) FOR THREE DIFFERENT TRAINS. I'M TO SEE WHAT THE TROUBLE IS AND TO TRY AND CORRECT IT. IS ALL."

CHARLIE WAS A RATHER **PLEASANT** IF **UNSPECTACULAR** APPEARING YOUNG MAN. HE MIGHT EVEN BE CONSIDERED ATTRACTIVE IF IT WEREN'T FOR HIS MOUNSEY ATTITUDE AND THOSE **GLASSES**. THEY WEREN'T QUITE THICK

ENOUGH TO DOUBLE AS REACTOR SHIELDING.

"(H... DID I JUST SEE YOU WALK OUT OF THAT WALL?"

"WHICH WALL?" THE MAN ASKED.

"THAT WALL, BEHIND YOU."

"OH, THAT WALL?"

"YES. THAT WALL. I DIDN'T THINK THERE WAS AN INSPECTION DOOR THERE, BUT...."

"THERE ISN'T. I DID."

"THAT'S **IMPOSSIBLE**," SAID **CHARLIE** REASONABLY. "PEOPLE DON'T GO AROUND WALKING THROUGH WALLS. IT ISN'T **DONE**. EVEN **MR. BROADHARE** CAN'T WALK THROUGH WALLS."



AS MANY BRAINS AS A **STALE PRETZEL**. THE BIG, SOFT KIND, WITH PLENTY OF SALT. SOMEONE WAS FULL OF DOUGH. CHARLIE HAD NO TROUBLE ISOLATING HIM.

"LOOK," HE SAID IMPLORINGLY, "YOU SIMPLY CAN'T **BE!**"

"THEN HOW THE DEUCE **AM I?**" THE GNOME STUCK OUT A HAIRY PAW. "LOOK, MY NAME'S **VAN GROOT.**"

"CHARMED," SAID CHARLIE, DAZEDLY SHAKING THE PROFFERED PALM.

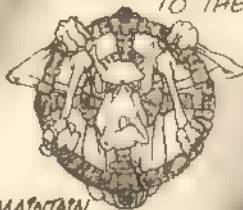
HERE I AM, HE THOUGHT, THIRTY METERS BELOW THE GROUND IN THE MIDDLE OF MANHATTAN SHAKING HANDS WITH A CHARACTER WHO CLAIMS TO BE OUT OF THE BROTHERS GRIMM NAMED VAN GROOT WHO WEARS BROOKS BROTHERS SUITS.

BUT HE **HAD** SEEN HIM WALK THROUGH THE WALL.

THIS SUGGESTED **TWO** POSSIBILITIES.

ONE, IT WAS REALLY HAPPENING AND THERE WERE INDEED SUCH CREATURES AS GNOMES.

TWO, HE'D BEEN BREATHING SUBWAY EXHAUST FUMES TOO LONG AND WAS ONLY OPERATING ON ONE CYLINDER. AT THE MOMENT HE INCLINED TO THE **LATTER** EXPLANATION.



"I DON'T DOUBT IT."

"THEN HOW CAN YOU STAND THERE AND MAINTAIN YOU WALKED THROUGH THAT WALL?"

"I'M NOT HUMAN. I'M A **GNOME**. A **METRO-GNOME**, TO BE SPECIFIC."

"OH, I GUESS THAT'S OKAY, THEN."

AT THAT POINT, NEW YORKER OR NO, CHARLIE FAINTED.

WHEN HE CAME TO, HE FOUND HIMSELF STARING INTO A PAIR OF SLIGHTLY GLOWING COAL-BLACK EYES. HE ALMOST FAINTED AGAIN, BUT SURPRISINGLY POWERFUL ARMS INSISTED HIM TO HIS FEET.

"NOW DON'T DO THAT TO ME AGAIN," SAID THE GNOME. "IT'S VERY RUDE AND DISCONCERTING. YOU MIGHT HAVE HIT YOUR HEAD ON THE RAIL AND HURT YOURSELF."

"WHAT RAIL?" ASKED CHARLIE GROGGILY.

"**THAT** ONE, THERE, IN THE MIDDLE."

"**ULP!**" CHARLIE TOOK SEVERAL STEPS BACK UNTIL HE WAS STANDING ON THE WALKWAY. "YOU'RE RIGHT. I REALLY COULD'VE HURT MYSELF, I WON'T DO IT AGAIN." HE LOOKED DISAPPROVINGLY AT THE GNOME. "YOU AREN'T HELPING THINGS ANY, YOU KNOW. WHY DON'T YOU **VANISH?** THERE'RE NO SUCH THINGS AS **GNOMES**. EVEN IN **NEW YORK**. **ESPECIALLY** IN **NEW YORK.**"

"**HA!**" GRUNTED THE GNOME. HE SAID IT IN SUCH A WAY AS TO IMPLY THAT AMONG THOSE ASSEMBLED, THERE WAS ONE POSSESSED OF ABOUT





"I KNOW HOW YOU MUST FEEL," SAID VAN GROOT SYMPATHETICALLY. "COME ALONG WITH ME FOR A BIT. THE EXERCISE WILL CLEAR YOUR HEAD. EVEN IF, **DE PUYSTER** KNOWS, THERE'S PROBABLY NOT MUCH IN IT ANYWAY."

"SURE. WHY NOT? OH, WAIT A MINUTE. I'VE GOT TO FIND AND CLEAR THAT BLOCKED SWITCH."

"WHICH SWITCH OVER IS IT?" THE GNOME INQUIRED.

"463. IT'S BEEN JUMPED TO INDICATE A BLOCKED TRACK AND THUS THE COMPUTER AUTOMATICALLY SENDS...."

"I KNOW."

"....SEVERAL ALTERNATE PROGRAMS... YOU KNOW?"

"SURE. I'M THE ONE WHO SET IT."

"YOU RESET IT? YOU CAN'T DO THAT!"

VAN GROOT SAID "HA!" AGAIN AND CHARLIE DECIDED THAT IF NOTHING ELSE HE WAS NOT OVERWHELMING THIS CREATURE WITH HIS PRECISION OF THOUGHT.

"OKAY. WHY DID YOU MOVE IT?"

"IT WAS INTERFERING WITH THE SMOOTH RUNNING OF OUR MINE CARTS."

"MINE CARTS! THERE AREN'T ANY MINE...." HE HESITATED. "I SEE. IT WAS INTERFERING WITH YOUR MINE CARTS." VAN GROOT NODDED APPROVINGLY. CHARLIE HAD TO HOP AND SKIP OCCASIONALLY TO KEEP UP WITH THE GNOME'S SHORT BUT BRISK STRIDE.

"UH, WHY COULDN'T YOUR MINE CARTS JUST GO OVER THE SWITCH WHEN IT WAS CORRECTLY SET?"

"BECAUSE," THE GNOME EXPLAINED, AS ONE WOULD TO A CHILD, "THAT WAY, THE METAL KEPT WHISPERING 'BLOCKED, BLOCKED.' THIS UPSET THE MINERS. THEY WORK VERY CLOSELY WITH METAL AND THEY'RE SENSITIVE TO IT. WITH THE

SWITCH THROWN THIS WAY, THE RAILS MURMUR 'OPEN, OPEN' AND THE BOYS FEEL BETTER."

"BUT THAT SEEMS LIKE SUCH A SMALL THING."

"IT IS," SAID VAN GROOT.

"THAT'S NOT VERY POLITE."

"NOW, WHY SHOULD WE BE **POLITE**? DO YOU EVER HEAR ANYONE SAY, 'LET'S TAKE UP A COLLECTION FOR **NEEDY GNOMES**?' IS THERE A **SAVE THE GNOMES LEAGUE**? OR A SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO GNOMES? WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU HEARD OF SOMEONE DOING SOMETHING FOR A GNOME, ANY GNOME!" VAN GROOT WAS GETTING EXCITED. HIS EARS FLAPPED AND HIS WHISKERS BRISTLED. "**CANARIES** AND **FRUIT-FLY** RESEARCHERS CAN GET GOVERNMENT MONEY, BUT **US**? ALL WE ASK ARE OUR UNALLENABLE RIGHTS, TO **LIFE, LIBERTY, PLenty OF FIGHTS AND BOOZE!**"

THIS ISN'T GETTING ME ANYWHERE, THOUGHT CHARLIE COGENTLY.

"I ADMIT IT SEEMS INEQUITABLE," VAN GROOT SEEMED TO CALM DOWN A LITTLE. "BUT I'D STILL APPRECIATE IT IF YOU'D LET ME SHIFT THE TRACK BACK THE WAY IT BELONGS."

"I TOLD YOU, IT WOULD BE INCONVENIENT. YOU HUMANS NEVER LEARN. STILL, YOU SEEM LIKE SUCH A NICE, PLEASANT SORT... FOR A **HUMAN**. PROPERLY DEFERENTIAL, TOO. I MAY CONSIDER IT. JUST **CONSIDER** IT, MIND."

"THAT'S VERY DECENT OF YOU. UH, (HOW DOES ONE MAKE SMALL TALK WITH A GNOME?) ... NICE WEATHER WE'RE HAVING, ISN'T IT?" SOMEONE HAD THROWN A BEER CAN OUT OF A SUBWAY WINDOW. CHARLIE STEPPED DOWN OFF THE WALKWAY TO REMOVE THE CAN FROM THE TRACKS.

"NOT PARTICULARLY."

THOUGHT ALL YOU PEOPLE LIVED IN IRELAND AND PLACES LIKE THAT."

"IRELAND, MY MYOPIC FRIEND, IS COLD, WET, RAINY, UNCIVILIZED, AND FULL OF CRAZY AMERICAN **EMIGRÉS**. ABOUT THE ONLY THING YOU CAN MINE THERE IN QUANTITY IS **PEAT**. SPEAKING AS A MINER, LET ME TELL YOU THAT IT'S PRETTY HARD TO TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR PROFESSION WHEN ALL YOU MINE IS **PEAT**. DID YOU EVER SEE A NECKLACE MADE OF **PEAT**? A QUEEN'S TIARA? AND IT TAKES A LOUSY FACET. **IRELAND!** THAT'S OUR TRADE YOU KNOW. WE'RE MOSTLY MINERS AND SMITHS."

"WHY?"

"THAT'S ABOUT THE **STUPIDEST** QUESTION I'VE EVER HEARD."

"SORRY."

"DO YOU THINK WE'D IGNORE A **WHOLE NEW WORLD** AND LEAVE IT TO YOU **HUMANS**? WHEN YOUR NOISY, SLOPPY, RIGHTEOUS ANCESTORS PADDLED ACROSS, **WE** CAME TOO. UNOBTRUSIVELY, OF COURSE. WHY THERE WERE GNOMES WITH **WASHINGTON** AT **VALLEY FORGE** WITH **JONES** ON THE...!"

"WELL, I CAN CERTAINLY UNDERSTAND THAT," SAID CHARLIE HASTILY, "BUT I THOUGHT YOU PREFERRED THE COUNTRY LIFE."

"BY AND LARGE, MOST OF US DO. BUT YOU KNOW HOW IT IS. THE WORLD'S BECOMING AN URBAN SOCIETY. WE HAVE TO CHANGE TOO. I'VE GOT RELATIVES UPSTATE YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE. THEY STILL THINK THEY CAN LIVE LIKE IT'S **WASHINGTON IRVING'S DAY. REACTIONARIES.**"

CHARLIE TRIED TO CONCEIVE OF A REACTIONARY GNOME, FAILED.

"AND GOOD GEM MINES ARE GETTING HARDER AND HARDER TO FIND OUT IN THE COUNTRY. ALL THE SURFACE ONES ARE BEING TURNED INTO **TOURIST TRAPS**. IT'S HARD ENOUGH TO FIND A DECENT PLACE TO **SLEEP** ANYMORE, WHAT WITH ONE PETROLEUM ENGINEER AFTER ANOTHER DOING **SEISMIC DOWNING**. ANY **IDIOT** COULD TELL YOU THERE'S NO OIL AT NINETY PER CENT OF THE

PLACES THEY TRY. BUT WILL THEY LEARN? **NO!** SO IT'S **BOOM, BOOM, BOOM**, NIGHT AFTER NIGHT. THE SUBWAYS ARE MILD AND CONSISTENT BY CONTRAST."

"WHOA. YOU MEAN YOU DO MINING... RIGHT HERE IN **MANHATTAN**?"

"UNDER **MANHATTAN**. OH WE'VE FOUND SOME **EXCELLENT SPOTS!** GO DOWN A LITTLE WAY AND THE GEM-BEARING ROCK IS PLENTIFUL. CHECK YOUR NEW YORK HISTORY. EXCAVATORS TURN UP FAIR QUALITY STONES. BUT NO ONE BOTHERS TO DIG FURTHER BECAUSE THEIR **GLASS TOMB** OR **PYRAMID** OR WHATEVER IS ON A DEADLINE. TOURMALINE, BERYL, THE QUARTZ GEMS...

THEY'VE TURNED UP IN THE FOUNDATIONS OF SOME PRETTY FAMOUS BUILDINGS. THE **RARER, MORE VALUABLE** STUFF IS BURIED **FURTHER DOWN**. EVEN SO, THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING ALMOST DID BECOME A MINE. BUT WE GOT TO THE DRILLER WHO FOUND THE **DIAMONDS.**"

CHARLIE SWALLOWED.

"AND THERE'S PLENTY OF **SCRAP METAL**. WE TURN IT INTO **SCEPTERS** AND THINGS. MOSTLY TO KEEP IN PRACTICE, THERE ISN'T MUCH OF A MARKET FOR **CAST-IRON SCEPTERS.**"

"I CAN IMAGINE," SAID CHARLIE SYMPATHETICALLY.

"STILL, YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN YOU'LL NEED A GOOD **SCEPTER**. OR A PROPER **FLAGAN-PHLANGE.**"

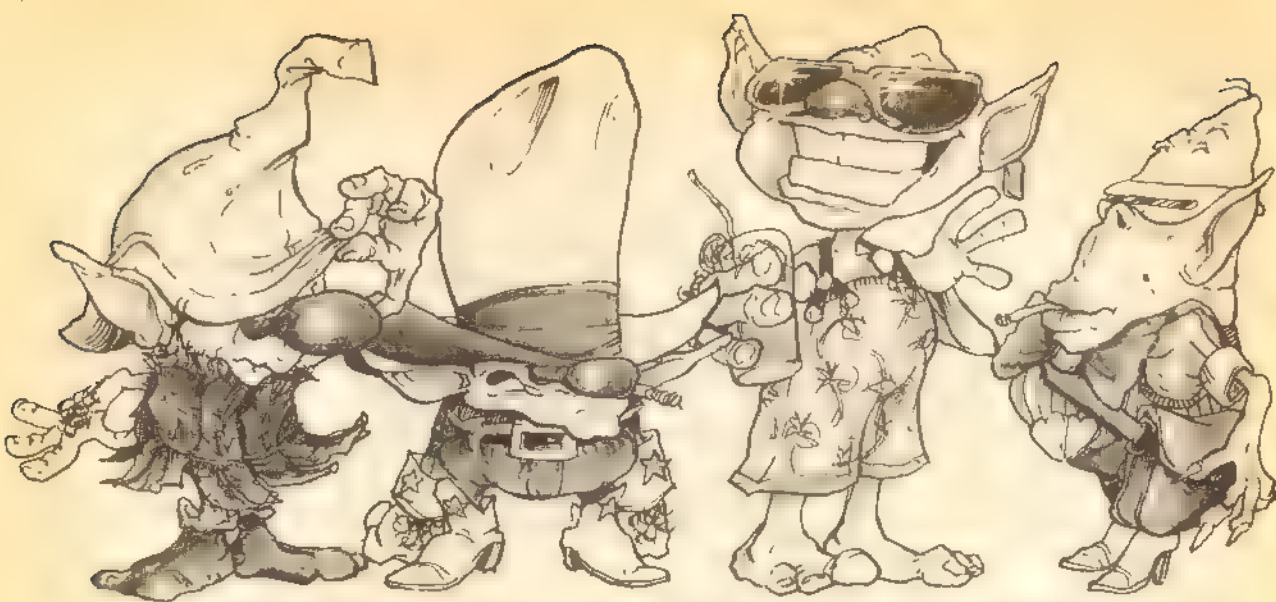
"PARDON MY IGNORANCE..."

"I'VE BEEN DOING THAT FOR HALF AN HOUR."

"...BUT WHAT IS A **FLAGAN-PHLANGE**?"

"OH, THEY'RE USED TO ATTRACT... BUT NEVER MIND, ABOUT THAT **SCRAP METAL** AND SUCH. WE'RE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT OUR ENVIRONMENT. GNOMES ARE GOOD FOR THE **ECOLOGY.**"





"UH." CHARLIE WAS RUNNING A POSSIBLE SCENARIO THROUGH HIS MIND. HE SAW HIMSELF REPORTING TO **UNDER COMMISSIONER BROADHARE**. "I'VE FIXED THE JAMMED SWITCH STR. THE GNOMES MOVED IT BECAUSE IT WAS INTERFERING WITH THEIR MINE CARTS. BUT I DON'T WANT YOU TO PROSECUTE THEM BECAUSE THEY'RE GOOD FOR THE ECOLOGY."

"RIGHT, DIMSDALE. JUST STAND THERE. EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT."

OH YEAH.

"BUT I WOULD HAVE IMAGINED...." HE WAVED AN UNCERTAIN HAND AT VAN GROOT, "WELL, JUST LOOK AT YOURSELF!"

THE GNOME DID, "WHAT DID YOU EXPECT? GREEN LEAVES, LEDERHOSEN AND A FEATHER CAP? YOU KNOW, MANHATTAN IS ONE OF THE FEW PLACES IN THE WORLD WHERE WE CAN OCCASIONALLY SLIP OUT AND MIX WITH HUMANS, WITHOUT STARTING A RIOT. ALWAYS AT NIGHT, OF COURSE, ARE YOU SURE YOU HAVEN'T SEEN ANY OF US? WE'RE VERY COMMON AROUND TIMES SQUARE AND THE THEATRE DISTRICT."

CHARLIE THOUGHT, BELOW THE FLATIRON BUILDING AT ONE A.M.? ON A BENCH IN WASHINGTON SQUARE? A GLIMPSE HERE, A REFLECTION IN A WINDOW THERE? WHO WOULD NOTICE?

AFTER ALL, THIS WAS NEW YORK.

"I SEE. DO ALL YOU CITY GNOMES....?"

"METROGNOMES," CORRECTED VAN GROOT PLACIDLY.

"DO ALL YOU METROGNOMES DRESS LIKE THAT?"

"SHARP, ISN'T IT? COST ME A PRETTY PENNY TOO. DOUBLE KNIT, SPECIAL CUT, OF COURSE. I CAN'T EXACTLY WEAR SOMETHING RIGHT OFF THE RACK. NO, IT DEPENDS ON YOUR JOB. I'M SORT OF AN ADMINISTRATOR. AN EXECUTIVE IF YOU WILL. DRESS ALSO DEPENDS ON WHERE YOU LIVE. THE GNOMES THAT WORK UNDER DALLAS PREFER STETSONS AND COWBOY BOOTS. THOSE

THAT LIVE UNDER MIAMI ARE PARTIAL TO SUN SHORTS AND BIG DARK SUNGLASSES. AND YOU SHOULD SEE THE GNOMES THAT LIVE UNDER A PLACE CALLED THE **SUNSET STRIP** IN LOS ANGELES!" HE SHOOK HIS BOSCHIAN BALDNESS. "WE'RE HERE."

THEY'D HALTED IN FRONT OF A SWITCHING SECTION OF TRACK. CHARLIE COULD SEE THE RED WARNING LIGHT STARING STEADILY UP-TUNNEL, A BALEFUL BLOODY EYE.

THE SILENCE WAS PUNCTUATED ABRUPTLY BY A LOW-PITCHED RUMBLING, LIKE THUNDER. IT GREW STEADILY TO A GROUND-SHAKING ROAR.





CLUMSY, HUGE, OLD FASH-
IONED MINE CART, BUILT TO
HALF SCALE, CAME EXPLOD-
ING OUT OF THE FAR WALL.
TWO GNOMES WERE PUSH-
ING IT FROM BEHIND WHILE
ANOTHER PULLED AND GUID-

ED THE FRONT. THE LEAD GNOME HAD **PURE**
WHITE HAIR AND A **THREE-FOOT BEARD** THAT
TRAILED BEHIND HIM LIKE A PENNANT.

THE CART CAREENED CRAZILY DOWN AND
OVER THE TRACKS, THREATENING TO OVERTURN
EVERYTIME IT HIT THE GROUND. SOMEHOW IT
SEEMED TO FLOW OVER THE RAILS. THE THREE
GNOMES WORE **DIRTY COVERALLS** AND **MINERS'**
HARD HATS WITH **CARBIDE LAMPS**. THE CART
WAS PILED HIGH WITH GLEAMING, UNCUT GEM-
STONES AND WHAT LOOKED LIKE AN **ARCHAIC**
WASHER-DRYER. THE LEAD GNOME HAD JUST
ENOUGH TIME FOR A FAST WAVE TO THEM BE-
FORE THE APPARITION DISAPPEARED INTO THE
NEAR WALL. THE RUMBLE DIED AWAY SLOWLY.
IT REMINDED CHARLIE OF THE SOUND HIS
GARBAGE DISPOSAL MADE WHEN IT WANTED TO
BE PETULANT.

"WELL, WHAT ARE YOU **WAITING** FOR?
SWITCH IT BACK."

"**WHAT?**" SAID CHARLIE DAZEDLY. "YOU MEAN,
I CAN?"

"YES. NOW HURRY UP, BEFORE I CHANGE
MY MIND."

CHARLIE STUMBLER OVER AND PULLED THE
MANUAL SWITCH. THE HEAVY SECTION OF TRACK
SLID PONDEROUSLY IN PLACE AND THE WARNING
LIGHT CHANGED TO A **BENEFACTANT LEAFY**
GREEN. IT WOULD SHOW GREEN NOW ON THE
MASTER LAYOUT IN THE CONTROLLER'S OFFICE.

"**NOW!**" SAID VAN GROOT WITH ENOUGH
FORCE TO STARTLE CHARLIE. "YOU OWE **ME** A
FAVOR!"

"YEAH. SURE. UH... WHAT DID YOU HAVE
IN MIND?" SAID CHARLIE APPREHENSIVELY, CALL-

ING UP IMAGES OF BLOOD-SUCKING AND DEVIL
SACRIFICE.

"I DON'T MIND TELLING YOU THAT THINGS
HAVE BEEN GETTING RATHER **EDGY** DOWN HERE.
WHAT WITH ONE SKYSCRAPER AFTER ANOTHER
GOING UP. AND **NOW** YOU'RE EXPANDING THE
SUBWAY AGAIN. I CAN'T PROMISE **WHAT** MIGHT
HAPPEN. ONE OF THESE DAYS, SOMEONE'S GO-
ING TO DRIVE A SHAFT RIGHT DOWN INTO ONE
OF OUR DIGGINGS AND WE'LL HAVE **ANOTHER**
STRIKE ON OUR HANDS."

"HAPPEN? STRIKE?"

"BOY, YOU SURE ARE **ELOQUENT** WHEN
YOU GET HUMMING. SURE. GNOMES AREN'T
KNOWN FOR THEIR EVEN TEMPER, YOU KNOW.
WHEN GNOMES GO ON STRIKE, THEY'VE GOT NOTH-

ING TO DO BUT **CAUSE MISCHIEF**. THE LAST
ONE WE HAD WAS **BACK IN...**" HE MURMUR-
ED A DATE THAT MOMENTARILY HAD NO MEAN-
ING TO CHARLIE.

THEN, "**HEY**, WASN'T THAT THE WEEK
OF THE **BIG BLACKOUT**, ACROSS THE NORTH-
EAST?"

"WELL, YOU KNOW HOW STRIKES SPREAD,
THE BOYS UNDER **PITTSBURGH** AND **BOSTON**
GOT TOGETHER WITH SOME POWER PLANT
GNOMES AND.... IT WAS A **TERRIBLE**
MESS! MOST AWKWARD!"

"**AWKWARD!** GOOD GRIEF, ANOTHER
FEW DAYS OF THAT AND...."

VAN GROOT NODDED SOBERLY, "**EXACT-**
LY. SOME OF US FINALLY APPEALED TO THE
BOYS' REASON, MORAL FIBRE, AND GOOD
NATURE. WHEN THAT DIDN'T WORK, WE
GOT MOST OF 'EM DEAD DRUNK AND THE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPAIRED A LOT OF
THE DAMAGE."

"NO WONDER THE ENGINEERS
COULD NEVER FIGURE OUT WHAT CAUSED IT."

"OH, THEY MADE UP **EXCUSES**. DIDN'T
STOP THEM FROM TAKING CREDIT FOR FIXING
THE TROUBLE," SAID VAN GROOT. "BUT THEN,
WHO EXPECTS GRATITUDE FROM **HUMANS?**"



"YOU EXPECT SOMETHING LIKE THAT MIGHT HAPPEN AGAIN? THAT WOULD BE **AWFUL!**"

THE GNOME SHRUGGED. "THAT DEPENDS ON YOUR POINT OF VIEW."

HE FLICKED AWAY HIS CIGAR ASH DAINITLY, "AS A MATTER OF FACT, IT SO HAPPENS THAT THIS NEW ADDITION TO YOUR SYSTEM...."

"IT'S NOT **MY** SYSTEM!"

"YES. ANYHOW, WE'VE GOT A PRETTY NICE **CRYSO-BERYL AND EMERALD MINE...**"

"**EMERALD MINE!**"

".... RIGHT UNDER THE INTERSECTION OF **6TH AVENUE AND 16TH STREET**, THAT MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU?"

"WHY NO, I... NO, WAIT A MINUTE. THAT'S WHERE...." HE GOGGLED AT VAN GROOT.

"YEP, THE NEW **BRONX-MANHATTAN TUNNEL** IS GOING THROUGH JUST SOUTH OF THERE. **THAT'S** NOT THE PROBLEM, IT'S THE NEW EXPRESS STATION THAT'S SET TO GO IN...."

"... RIGHT OVER YOUR MINE," WHISPERED CHARLIE.

"THE BOYS ARE **PRETTY UPSET** ABOUT IT. THEY READ THE **TIMES**. IT'S A PRETTY EXPLOSIVE SITUATION, **DIMSDALE. EXPLOSIVE.**" HE LOOKED HARD AT CHARLIE.

"BUT WHAT DO YOU EXPECT **ME** TO DO? I'M ONLY SECOND ASSISTANT INSPECTOR TO THE UNDERCOMMISSIONER FOR SUBWAY MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR. I HAVEN'T GOT THE **POWER** TO ORDER CHANGES IN THINGS LIKE STATION LOCATIONS AND ROUTINGS AND STUFF!"

"THAT'S NOT **MY** PROBLEM," SAID VAN GROOT.

"BUT THEY'RE SCHEDULED TO START BLASTING FOR THAT STATION... MY GOD, **THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW!**"

"THAT'S WHAT I HEAR," VAN GROOT SIGHED, "TOO BAD, I DON'T KNOW WHAT'LL HAPPEN THIS TIME, THERE'S BEEN TALK OF GETTING TO-

GETHER WITH THE **VERMONT AND NEW HAMPSHIRE** GNOMES. THEY WANT TO POUR MAPLE SYRUP INTO THE TELEPHONE CABLES AND SWITCHES BETWEEN **GREAT NECK AND OTTAWA**. A STICKY SITUATION, I CAN TELL YOU!"

"BUT YOU CAN'T....!" VAN GROOT LOOKED AT CHARLIE AS THOUGH HE WERE EXAMINING A SPECIAL SPECIES OF EARTH WORM.

"YES YOU CAN."

"THAT'S BETTER," SAID VAN GROOT. "I'LL DO WHAT I CAN. BUT WHILE I DISAGREE WITH THE BOYS' METHODS, I SYMPATHIZE WITH THEIR SENTIMENTS. THEY TOOK AN EMERALD OUT OF THERE ONCE THAT WAS...." HE PAUSED. "BEST I CAN GIVE YOU IS ABOUT TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, NO LATER THAN TWELVE O'CLOCK TOMORROW NIGHT."

"WHY TWELVE?," ASKED CHARLIE INANIMATELY.

"IT'S TRADITIONAL. IF YOU'VE MANAGED TO HELP ANY, I'LL MEET YOU BACK HERE. IF NOT, GO SOAK YOUR HEAD."

"LOOK, I TOLD YOU, I'M ONLY A SECOND ASSISTANT TO...."

"I REMEMBER. I'M NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR FAILINGS. **YOUR PROBLEM.**"

"TOMORROW'S SATURDAY. ON SUNDAYS I ALWAYS CALL MY MOTHER IN GREENVILLE. IF YOU GUM UP THE TELEPHONE LINES I WON'T BE ABLE TO."

"AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF GENERAL COMPUTERS, WHO USUALLY CALLS HIS MISTRESS IN GENEVA ON SUNDAY MORNINGS, WON'T BE ABLE TO, EITHER," SAID VAN GROOT. "IT'LL BE A VERY DEMOCRATIC CRISIS. REMEMBER, **MIDNIGHT TOMORROW.**"

PUFFING MIGHTILY ON THE CIGAR AND IGNORING CHARLIE'S ENTREATIES, THE GNOME EXECUTIVE DISAPPEARED INTO THE NEAR WALL OF THE TUNNEL.

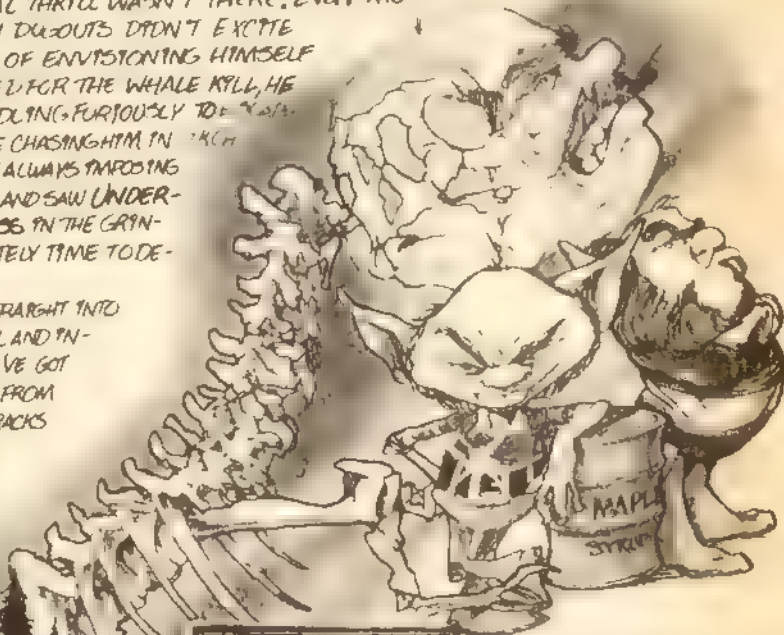


HE MORNING WAS COOL AND CLEAR. ON SATURDAY MORNINGS, CHARLIE USUALLY WENT FIRST TO THE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, THEN OFF TO THE GUGGENHEIM TO SEE IF ANYTHING NEW HAD COME IN DURING THE WEEK. FROM THERE IT WAS DOWN TO THE VILLAGE FOR A QUICK TOUR THROUGH HELMACKER'S ACRES OF BOOKS BOOK-STORE. THEN HOME, WHERE HE WOULD TREAT HIMSELF TO A EXPENSIVE TV DINNER INSTEAD OF THE USUAL FRIED CHICKEN OR SWISS STEAK. OUT TO A FILM OR CONCERT AND THEN HOME.

TODAY, HOWEVER, HIS SCHEDULE WAS MARKEDLY ALTERED. HE WENT TO THE MUSEUM ON TIME. THE USUAL THRILL WASN'T THERE. EVEN THE EXHIBITS OF NORTHWESTERN INDIAN DUGOUTS DIDN'T EXCITE HIM AS THEY USUALLY DID. INSTEAD OF ENVYING HIMSELF FERTHET IN THE BOW, HARPOON TRYING FOR THE WHALE KILL, HE SAW HIMSELF CROUCHED IN THE REAR, PADDLING FURIOUSLY TO ESCAPE THE HORDES OF ANGRY GNOMES THAT WERE CHASING HIM IN DARK CANOES. AND WHEN HE LOOKED AT THE ALWAYS IMPRESSIVE SKELETON OF THE TYRANNO SAURUS REX AND SAW UNDER-COMMISSIONER BROADHARE'S SOUR PUGS IN THE GRINNING SKULL, HE DECIDED IT WAS DEFINITELY TIME TO DEPART.

HE MADE UP A SPEECH. HE'D WALK STRAIGHT INTO COMMISSIONER FEELY'S OFFICE, POWERFUL AND INSISTENT, AND SAY, "LOOK HERE FEELY, YOU'VE GOT TO SHIFT THE NEW SIXTH AVENUE STATION FROM THE NORTH TO THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE TRACKS BECAUSE IF YOU DON'T THE GNOMES WILL DESTROY OUR GREAT TELEPHONE NETWORK WITH MAPLE SYRUP AND....!"

CHARLIE MOANED.



HE WAS STILL MOANING WHEN HE STUMBLED OUT OF THE MUSEUM. THE STONE LIONS WHO GUARDED THE PORTALS WATCHED HIM GO. HE HEADED FOR THE GUGGENHEIM OUT OF HABIT BUT FOUND HIMSELF INSTEAD WANDERING AIMLESSLY THROUGH CENTRAL PARK.

LET'S SEE. HE COULD SNEAK INTO THE PLANNING OFFICE AND BURN THE STATION BLUEPRINTS. NO, THAT WOULDN'T DO. THEY WERE BOUND TO HAVE PLENTY OF COPIES. CHARLIE HAD TO FILL OUT THREE COPIES OF A FORM HIMSELF JUST TO REQUESTION A BOX OF PAPER CLIPS.

HE COULD SNEAK INTO THE STATION SITE AND TRY AND SABOTAGE THE CONSTRUCTION MACHINERY. THAT WOULD DELAY THINGS FOR A WHILE, EXCEPT HE DIDN'T THINK HE KNEW ENOUGH ABOUT THE MACHINERY TO SUCCESSFULLY BUST ANY OF IT. HE'D NEVER BEEN VERY MECHANICALLY INCLINED. IN FACT HE'D FAILED HANDICRAFTS MISERABLY IN HIGH SCHOOL.

HOW ABOUT USING THE SITE TO STAGE A RALLY FOR THE ADMISSION OF NATIONALIST CHINA TO THE U.N.? THAT WAS ALWAYS SURE TO DRAW A NOISY, RAMBUNCTIOUS CROWD. THEY MIGHT EVEN SABOTAGE THE RALLY THEMSELVES! HE KNEW A FRIEND WHO WAS FAINTLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE JOHN BIRCH SOCIETY WHO MIGHT... NO, THAT WOULDN'T WORK. RIGHTIST RADICALS WOULD HARDLY BE THE GROUP TO GET TO TRY AND HALT THE CONSTRUCTION OF ANYTHING.

BESIDES, THEY WERE ALL ONLY TEMPORARY. DELAYING TACTICS. ALSO HE COULD GO TO JAIL FOR ANY ONE OF THEM, A PROSPECT WHICH ENTHRALLED HIM EVEN LESS THAN MISSING HIS REGULAR SUNDAY CALL TO HIS MOTHER IN GREENVILLE.



DINNER TIME ROLLED AROUND AND HE **STILL** HADN'T THOUGHT OF ANY THINGS. HE WAS REMINDED OF THE REAL WORLD BY THE SMELL OF INCINERATING VEAL CORDON BLEU. THE DELICATELY CARBONIZED ODFOR PERMEATED HIS TINY LIVING ROOM. THE UNAPPETIZING RESULT IN HIS STOVE WAS NOT CALCULATED TO IMPROVE HIS HUMOUR, ALREADY BUMPING ALONG AT A SEASONABLY **LOW EBB**.

WHAT HE DID WAS **MOST UNUSUAL**. FOR CHARLIE IT WAS **UNIQUE**. HE DUG DEE DOWN, DEEP, DEEF DEEF, INTO THE BOWELS OF HIS CLIPCARDS, PAST COUNTLESS CANS OF MR. PLANTER'S PEANUTS, DOWN PAST AN IMMACULATE COCKTAIL SHAKER, NEVER USED SINCE ITS PURCHASE THREE YEARS AGO, DOWN PAST THINGS BETTER LEFT UNMENTIONED, UNTIL HE FOUND A **HAIR OF THE DOG**.

NEVER MORE THAN A **SOCIAL DRINKER** (MOOSTLY AT OFFICIAL COMPANY FUNCTIONS), CHARLIE THOUGHT A FEW SIPS MIGHT CHARDEN HIS THOUGHTS. IT SEEMED TO WORK FOR OLD AGENT X-14 REGULARLY EVERY FRIDAY EVENING ON CHANNEL 3. SO HE SIPPED **DELICATELY** AND **CAREFULLY**. FOR VARIETY, HE ALTERNATED BOTTLES, THEY WERE **FRIENDLY DOGS** INDEED. WARM AND CUDDLY, LIKE A MALTESE. SHORTLY THEREAFTER THEY WERE RATHER MORE LIKE A COUPLE OF PLAYFUL **ST. BERNARDS**. AND VERY SHORTLY THEREAFTER THEREAFTER, HE WAS IN NO CONDITION TO ASPIRE TO ANY ANALOGIES AT ALL.

ACTUALLY HE HADN'T **INTENDED** TO GET DRUNK. IT WAS, HOWEVER, AN INEXCAPABLE BY-PRODUCT OF HIS DRINKING. HE RAN OUT OF SIP-PABLES IN WHAT SEEMED INDECENTLY SHORT ORDER.



HE THREW ON HIS RAINCOAT...IT WASN'T RAINING, BUT YOU NEVER KNEW, HE THOUGHT BELLIGERENTLY...AND HEADED IN SEARCH OF MORE FOLLICLES OF THE POOCH. IT WAS SHEER GOOD FORTUNE HE DIDN'T START FOR THE POUND.

ON THE WAY, HE HAD THE FORTUNE AND MISFORTUNE TO ENCOUNTER MISS OVERSHADE IN THE HALLWAY. MISS OVERSHADE OCCUPIED THE APARTMENT ACROSS THE HALL FROM CHARLIE, ON THE GOOD SIDE OF THE BUILDING. SHE WAS A LOCAL PERSONALITY OF SOME NOTE, BEING THE WEATHER LADY ON THE EARLY NEWS ON CHANNEL 8. SHE HAD AT ONE TIME BEEN VOTED 'MISS CONTINENTAL SHELF' BY THE PORT OF NEW YORK AUTHORITY AND CURRENTLY HELD THE TITLE 'MISS HIGH PRESSURE AREA' FROM THE NEW YORK COUNCIL OF METEOROLOGISTS.

IN POINT OF FACT, SHE ACTUALLY WAS CONSTRUCTED RATHER ALONG THE LINES OF AN ESPECIALLY ESTHETIC GATHERING OF CUMULUS CLOUDS. SHE NOTICED CHARLIE, SORT OF.

"GOOD EVENING, MISTER...UH, MISTER..."

"DIMSDALE," MUMBLED CHARLIE. "DIMSDALE."

"OH YES! HOW ARE YOU, MISTER DIMSDALE!" WITHOUT PAUSING TO LEARN IF HE WAS ON THE BRINK OF A HORRIBLE DEATH, SHE VANISHED INTO HER APARTMENT. THAT VOICE WAS CALCULATED TO BRING ON THE MONSOON. FOR ALL SHE CARES, HE THOUGHT, I MIGHT AS WELL BE A... A GNOME.

HE HURRIED DOWN THE STAIRS, INSULTING THE ELEVATOR. AT SEVEN SHARP, CHARLIE WAS PERUSING THE SOLUBLE DELIGHTS OF AN AGED AND NOT-SO-VENERABLE ESTABLISHMENT KNOWN AS BIG SWACK'S BAR. CURRENTLY, HE EXISTED IN A STATE OF BLISSFUL INEBRIATION THAT FOLLOWED A THIN PATH BETWEEN NIRVANA AND HELL. FOR THE NONCE NIRVANA PREVAILLED.



C HARLIE HADA THOUGHT, GRAPPLED WITH IT. IT WAS BROUGHT ON BY SOMETHING VIN GREET HAD SAID. HE LOOKED AT IT HARD, PIERCINGLY, TURNING IT OVER IN HIS MIND AND SEARCHING FOR CRACKS. IT SQUIRMED TRYING TO GET AWAY. HE WAS CAREFUL, BECAUSE HE'D SEEN OTHER THINGS TONIGHT WHICH HADN'T BEEN AT ALL REAL. THIS THOUGHT HOWEVER, WAS.



HE LEFT SO FAST HE FORGOT TO COLLECT THE CHANGE FROM HIS LAST DRINK. AN OCCASION WHICH SO ASTONISHED THE PROPRIETOR, 'BIG SWACK' (WHOSE REAL NAME WAS HOCHMEISTER), THAT HE TALKED OF NOTHING ELSE FOR DAYS AFTERWARDS.



ONEON, JONSON! BILL JONSON! CHARLIE HAMMERED UNVELOD-ICALLY ON THE DOOR.

BILL JONSON WAS A SANDY-HAIRED, RATHER SANDY-FACED YOUNG GEOLOGIST WHO OCCASIONALLY SHARED WITH CHARLIE A PALLID SANDWICH IN THE EQUALLY PALLID SUBWAY AUTHORITY

CAFETERIA. HE DID NOT NEED MINUTES TO OBSERVE THAT HIS FRIEND WAS NOT HIS USUAL BLAND SELF.

"CHARLIE? WHAT THE HELL'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?"

NOW CHARLIE WAS SOMEWHAT COHERENT BECAUSE ON THE WAY UP TO HIS FRIEND'S ABODE HE'D HAD ENOUGH SENSE TO INGEST **THREE SOBER-**



UPS, THESE WERE CHASED DOWNSTREAM CONSECUTIVELY BY WATER, HALF A PEPER, AND AN ORANGE DRINK OF SUFFICIENT SWEETNESS TO DESTROY ANY SELF-RESPECTING MOLAR INSIDE OF A MONTH. AS A RESULT HIS MIND CLEARED AT THE EXPENSE OF HIS STOMACH, WHICH WAS STARTING TO CLOUD OVER.

"LISTEN, BILL! CAN YOU TAKE A... A SOUNDING, A READING, A... YOU KNOW, TO DETERMINE IF THERE'S SOMETHING SPECIAL IN THE GROUND? LIKE A **BIG HOLLOW PLACE?**"

"I SUSPECT A BIG HOLLOW PLACE AND IT'S NOT IN THE GROUND. COME BACK TOMORROW MAYBE, CHARLIE, HUH? I'VE GOT COMPANY, YOU KNOW? HE SORT OF TRIED A HALF-GRIN, HALF BLINK. IT MADE HIM LOOK LIKE A MAN SUFFERING FROM AN ATTACK OF THE GALLOPING GRIPES.

"BILL, YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE THIS SOUNDING! YOU CAN TAKE ONE? I'VE HEARD YOU MENTION IT BEFORE. PAY ATTENTION!... **HTC!**... MAN! THIS IS IMPORTANT! THINK OF THE TELEPHONE COMPANY!"

"I'D RATHER NOT. I GOT MY BILL TWO DAYS AGO. NOW BE A GOOD CHAP, CHARLIE, AND RUN ALONG. IT CAN WAIT TILL MONDAY. AND I HAVE GOT COMPANY."

CHARLIE WAS DESPERATE. "JUST ANSWER ME. CAN YOU TAKE A SOUNDING?"

"YOU MEAN TEST THE **SUBSTRATA**, LIKE I DO FOR THE SUBWAY AUTHORITY?"

"**YEAH! THAT!**" CHARLIE DANCED AROUND EXCITEDLY. THIS DID NOT INSPIRE BILL TO LOOK ON HIS FRIEND WITH FAVOR.

"YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE ONE FOR ME!"

"A **READING?** YOU'RE DRUNK!"

"**CERTAINLY NOT!**"

"THEN WHY ARE YOU LEANING TO THE LEFT LIKE THAT?"

"I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A LIBERAL. LISTEN, YOU KNOW THE NEW STATION THEY'RE PLANNING TO BUILD FOR THE EXTENDED BRONX-MANHATTAN LINE? THE ONE AT 6TH AND 16TH?"

"I'VE HEARD ABOUT IT. THAT'S MORE YOUR DEPARTMENT THAN MINE, YOU KNOW."

"INDIRECTLY. YOU'VE GOT TO COME DOWN AND TAKE A READING THERE. NOW, **TONIGHT!** I'VE REASON TO SUSPECT THAT THE GROUND THERE IS UNSTABLE."

"YOU ARE **CRAZY**. THERE'S NO REAL UNSTABLE GROUND IN MANHATTAN, UNLESS YOU COUNT SOME OF THE BARS IN THE VILLAGE. IT'S PRACTICALLY SOLID GRANITE. DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT TIME IT IS ANYWAY?" HE LOOKED POINTEDLY AT HIS WATCH, "MY GOD, IT'S NEARLY 8:30!"

THIS UNSUBTLE HINT DID NOT HAVE THE INTENDED EFFECT ON CHARLIE.

"MY GOD," HE ECHOED, LOOKING IN THE GENERAL DIRECTION OF HIS OWN TIME PIECE, "IT'S NEARLY 8:30! WE'VE GOT TO HURRY! WE'VE ONLY GOT 'TIL TWELVE!"

"I'M BEGINNING TO THINK YOU'VE GOT EVEN LESS THAN THAT," SAID BILL.

"WHO DOES?" CAME A MELLIFLOUS VOICE FROM BEHIND THE DOOR.

"WHO'S THAT?" CHARLIE ASKED, TRYING TO PEER OVER HIS FRIEND'S SHOULDER.

"THE TELEVISION. NOW LOOK, GO ON HOME AND I'LL DO WHATEVER YOU ASK... MONDAY, HUH? PLEASE?"

"NONSENSE, BILL." SAID THE VOICE. THE DOOR OPENED WIDER. A YOUNG LADY IN RATHER TIGHT SLACKS AND SWEATER CAME INTO VIEW BEHIND BILL. "WHY DON'T YOU INVITE YOUR FRIEND IN? CHARLIE, WASN'T IT?"

"STILL IS," SAID CHARLIE.

"I CAN'T THINK OF A SINGLE REASON," SAID BILL IN A TONE THAT WOULD SUFFICE TO TAN LEATHER. HE OPENED THE DOOR WITH GREAT RELUCTANCE AND CHARLIE SLIPPED INSIDE.

"HI. MY NAME'S ABIGAIL." THE GIRL CHIRPED.

"ABIGAIL?" SAID CHARLIE IN DISBELIEF.

"ABIGAIL," REPLIED BILL NODDING SLOWLY.

"MY NAME'S CHARLIE." SAID CHARLIE.

"I KNOW."

"YOU DO? HAVE WE MET BEFORE?"

"GET TO THE POINT," SAID BILL.

"ABIGAIL, YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME. I MUST ENLIST BILL'S INEXHAUSTIBLE FOUNT OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE. IN AN ENTERPRISE THAT IS VITAL TO THE SAFETY OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK!" ABIGAIL'S EYES WENT WIDE. BILL'S GOT HARD, LIKE DUM DUM BULLETS.

"I HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE," CHARLIE CONTINUED CONSPIRATORIALLY, "THAT THE GROUND AT 6TH AVENUE AND 16TH STREET IS UNSTABLE. IF THIS IS NOT PROVEN TONIGHT LIVES WILL BE ENDANGERED! BUT I MUST BUTTRESS MY THEORY WITH FACT."

"DON'T SWEAR. GEE, THAT'S FANTASTIC! ISN'T THAT FANTASTIC, BILL?"

"IT SURE IS," BILL REPLIED. IN A MINUTE HE WOULD FANTASIZE HER FURTHER BY STRANGLING HIS OWN FRIEND RIGHT BEFORE HER FANTASIZED EYES.

CHARLIE BEGAN TO PROWL AROUND THE LIVING ROOM, HIS OWN OCULARS DARTING RIGHT TO LEFT. "WELL, DON'T JUST STAND THERE, BILL! WE'VE GOT TO ASSEMBLE YOUR EQUIPMENT. NOW. DON'T YOU AGREE, ABIGAIL?"

"OH YES. HURRY BILL, LET'S DO!"

"YES." MURMURED BILL TIGHTLY. "JUST LET ME GET MY HAT AND COAT." HE TOOK ANOTHER LOOK AT HIS FRIEND. "IS IT RAINING OUT?"

CHARLIE WAS ON HANDS AND KNEES, PEERING UNDER THE COUCH. "RAINING OUT? DON'T BE ABSURD! OF COURSE IT ISN'T RAINING OUT! WHAT MAKES YOU THINK IT'S RAINING OUT?"

"NOTHING," SAID BILL. "I CAN'T IMAGINE WHERE I GOT THE IDEA."





9TH AVENUE AND 16TH STREET WAS NOT A VERY BUSY INTERSECTION, EVEN LATE ON A SATURDAY NIGHT, ESPECIALLY SINCE IT HAD BEEN BLOCKED OFF IN SPOTS BY THE CONSTRUCTION MACHINERY. ON THE

OTHER HAND, IT WASN'T EXACTLY A DARK ALLEY, EITHER. THE WINDOWS, COMFORTABLY TUCKED INTO THEIR CORNERS, WERE NO PROBLEM, BUT THERE WERE ENOUGH PEDESTRIANS ABOUT TO MAKE BILL FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE AND CONSPICUOUS, WITH HIS HEAVY FIELD CASE.

"WHY CAN'T WE GO IN THERE?," HE ASKED, POINTING TO AN ASSEMBLAGE OF HEAVY EARTH MOVERS.

"BECAUSE THE CONSTRUCTION AREA IS PROTECTED BY A THREE-METER HIGH WIRE FENCE TOPPED WITH THREE ROWS OF BARBED WIRE WITH TRIPLE ALARMS ON THE GATES AND IS PATROLLED BY VICIOUS LARGE-FANGED GUARD DOGS, IS WHY."

"OH," SAID BILL.

"CAN'T YOU DO WHATEVER YOU HAVE TO DO RIGHT HERE?," ASKED ABIGAIL.

"YEAH, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SET OFF A VERY BIG EXPLOSION, ARE YOU?," CHARLIE BLURTED.

IT IS TRUE THAT CHARLIE WAS STILL FAIRLY INTELLIGIBLE, BUT THE EFFECTS OF THE SOBER-UP WERE WEARING OFF AND HE TENDED TO TALK RATHER LOUDER THAN NORMAL.

SO THE WORD "EXPLOSION" DID HAVE THE USEFUL EFFECT OF SENDING SEVERAL COUPLES SCURRYING TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STREET AND CLEARING A BROAD SPACE AROUND THEM.

"FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD!," WHISPERED BILL, "WILL YOU SHUT UP ABOUT EXPLOSIONS! YOU WANT TO GET US ARRESTED?" HE TURNED TO SUR-

VEY THE WOODEN FENCE THAT CLOSED OFF THE VACANT LOT BEHIND THEM. "THERE'S BOUND TO BE A LOOSE BOARD OR A GATE IN THIS FENCE. ALL I'M GOING TO DO INSIDE IS SET OFF THE SMALLEST CAP I'VE GOT. YOU'LL GET THE BRIEFEST READING I CAN AND THAT'S IT!"

WHILE BILL AND CHARLIE SCREENED HER FROM THE STREET, ABIGAIL SLIPPED UNDER THE HINGED PLANK THEY'D FOUND. CHARLIE FOLLOWED AND BILL CAME AFTER, AFTER SQUEEPING THROUGH HIS FIELD KIT. THEY STOOD ALONE IN THE EMPTY LOT.

"OOOO, ISN'T THIS EXCITING?," ABIGAIL WHISPERED.

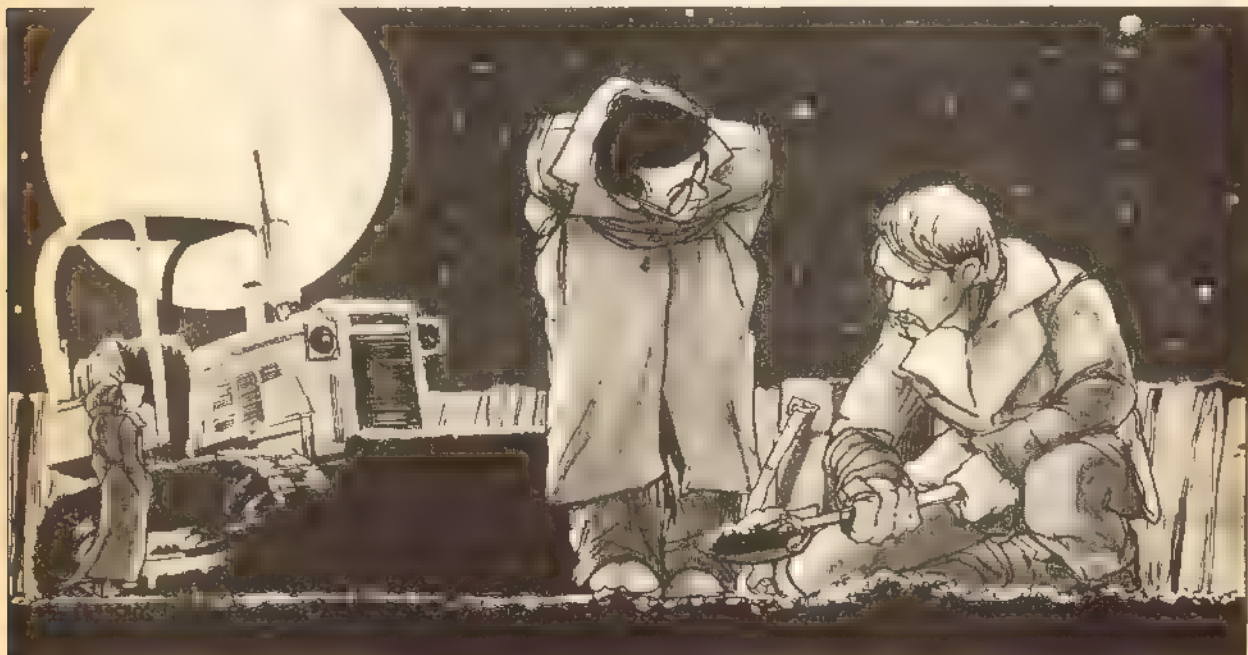
"ONE OF THE MOST THRILLING NIGHTS OF MY LIFE," GROWLED BILL. HE'D LONG SINCE RESIGNED HIMSELF TO THE FACT THAT THE ONLY WAY HE WAS GOING TO GET RYD OF HIS FRIEND, SHORT OF HOMICIDE, WAS TO GO THROUGH WITH THIS IDIOCY.

"ONLY LET'S BE READY TO GET OUT OF HERE QUICK, HUH? I DON'T FEEL LIKE TRYING TO EXPLAIN TO ANY OF NEW YORK'S FINEST WHAT I'M DOING TAKING SEISMIC READINGS IN A VACANT LOT AT 9 O'CLOCK SATURDAY NIGHT."

"IS IT THAT LATE ALREADY?," YELLED CHARLIE, OBLIVIOUS TO HIS FRIENDS ATTEMPTS TO SHUSH HIM. "HURRY, HURRY!"

"ANYTHING, IF YOU'LL ONLY SHUT UP!" BILL MOANED NERVOUSLY. THE OTHERS WATCHED WHILE HE PROCEEDED TO DIG A SMALL HOLE WITH A COLLAPSIBLE SPADE. HE PUT SOMETHING FROM HIS CASE INTO IT, THEN FILLED IN THE DIRT, TAMPING IT DOWN TIGHTLY WITH THE FLAT OF THE SPADE. HE WALKED BACK TO THEM, TRAILING TWO THIN WIRES.

"THIS IS EXCITING!," SAID ABIGAIL. BILL GAVE HER A PAINED LOOK WHILE CHARLIE FAIRLY HOPPED WITH IMPATIENCE.





WILL HIT THE SMALL PUSHBUT-TON DEVICE THE WIRES LED FROM. THERE WAS A MUFFLED THUMP! CLOUDS OF EARTH WERE THROWN SEVERAL METERS INTO THE TEDID AIR OF THE NEW YORK NIGHT. THEY WERE ACCOMPANIED BY A NON-ORGANIC SHOE AND SEVERAL LONG-EMPTY TUNA-FISH CANS.

"WELL?" SAID CHARLIE. HE SAID IT SEVERAL TIMES BEFORE HE REALIZED BILL COULDN'T HEAR HIM THROUGH THE EARPHONES. FINALLY HE TAPPED HIM ON THE SHOULDER. "HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?"

"TOO LONG," SAID BILL, MOONING AT ABIGAIL, WHO WAS INSPECTING THE MIDGET CRATER. "IT'S A VERY SMALL BANG. I'VE GOT TO AMPLIFY & RE-AMPLIFY THE RESULTS AND WAIT FOR A PROPER PRINT-OUT FROM THE COMPUTER, MAYBE AN HOUR, MAYBE TWO."

"THAT IS TOO LONG!" CHARLIE WHIMPERED PITTEOUSLY.

"THAT IS TOO BAD!" BILL WAS JUST ABOUT AT THE END OF HIS GOOD HUMOR.

"WELL, OKAY, BUT HURRY IT UP, WILL YOU?" BILL CHEWED AIR AND DIDN'T REPLY.

"I DON'T BELIEVE IT!" THERE WAS A PECULIAR EXPRESSION ON THE YOUNG GEOLOGIST'S FACE.

"WHAT IS IT, WHAT'S HAPPENED?" SAID ABIGAIL. BILL TURNED SLOWLY FROM HIS INSTRUMENTS, LOOKED UP AT CHARLIE.

"YOU WERE RIGHT. SON OF A BITCH, YOU WERE RIGHT! I DON'T BELIEVE IT, BUT... UNSTABLE! GEEZ, THERE'S A REGULAR CAVE DOWN THERE!"

"WILL IT AFFECT THE TUNNEL?"

"NO, NOT THE LINE, BUT AS FOR PUTTING A STATION DOWN THERE... THE WHOLE THING COULD COLLAPSE UNDER SECTIONS OF THE BLOCK. AND I COULDN'T BEGIN TO PREDICT WHAT BLASTING HERE MIGHT DO. I DON'T THINK ANYONE WOULD GET HURT, BUT THE ADDED EXPENSE... TO INSURE

THE SAFETY OF THE CRANE OPERATORS AND SUCH..."

"NOW THAT WOULD BE SERIOUS," SAID CHARLIE. "HEY, WHAT TIME IS IT?"

"'BOUT TWENTY TO TWELVE," BILL REPLIED GLANCING DOWN AT HIS WATCH.

CHARLIE LOOKED ASKANCE AT HIS WATCH. "HEAVENS, IT'S TWENTY TO TWELVE! I'VE GOT TO RUN! SEE YOU SOON, BILL..."

"NOT LIKELY," THE GEOLOGIST MURMURED.

"AND THANKS, THANKS A MILLION! YOU'LL REPORT YOUR RESULTS TO THE COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE, WON'T YOU?"

"YEAH, SURE!" SHOUTED BILL AS HIS FRIEND SLIPPED THROUGH THE LOOSE BOARD. NO REASON NOT TO. HE'D GET A LOT OF CREDIT FOR HIS FORESIGHT IN DETECTING THE FAULTED AREA, MAYBE A PAPER OR JOURNAL ARTICLE OUT OF IT, TOO. AND HE'D TAKE IT AFTER WHAT HE'D GONE THROUGH TONIGHT.

"NOW DON'T BE BITTER," WHISPERED ABIGAIL, KISSING HIM SELECTIVELY. "YOU WERE MARVELOUS! IT WASN'T THAT DIFFICULT. BESIDES, I THINK IT WAS FUN. AND DIFFERENT. I'VE NEVER BEEN INVITED FOR A SEISMIC READING BEFORE."

BILL SQUINTED GUMMILY INTO THE BRIGHT LIGHT THAT HAD SETTLED ON THEM. "AND YOU'LL BE THE FIRST GIRL TO BE ARRESTED FOR IT TOO," HE SIGHED, KISSING HER RIGHT BACK.



AN GROOT! HEY VAN GROOT!" CHARLIE HAD BEEN STUMBLING THROUGH THE TUNNEL FOR WHAT SEEMED LIKE HOURS. HE'D WANDERED OFF ON THE INSPECTOR'S WALKWAY, UNMINDFUL OF THE FACT THAT AT ANY MOMENT A TRAIN COULD COME ROARING DOWN THE SUBTERRANEAN TRACK AND SQUASH HIM LIKE A BUG.

"HERE GNOME, HERE GNOME!" THAT SOUNDED EVEN WORSE. IF HE RAN INTO A NIGHT INSPECTOR

HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO ALIBI AWAY *VAN GROOT!* HE DIDN'T THINK HE WAS CLEVER ENOUGH TO EXPLAIN AWAY *HERE GNOME!*

COULD HE? WELL, COULD HE?



DE PUYSTER!,* CAME A FAMILIAR VOICE. "STOP THAT SHOUTING! I CAN HEAR YOU.*
 "VAN GROOT! I'VE FOUND YOU!"
 "EUREKA,* THE GNOME SAID DRILY. "I'D SURE BE DISTRESSED IF YOU'D FOUND ME AND I TURNED OUT TO BE SOME ONE ELSE.*

TONIGHT THE GNOME ADMINISTRATOR WAS WEARING BLUE SHARKSKIN. THE BERET WAS GONE, REPLACED BY A GUN-METAL BLUE TURBAN. A GOLD SILK HANDKERCHIEF PROTRUDED FROM THE JACKET POCKET, MATCHED BY GOLD SHOES OF WATER BUFFALO HYDE.

"WELL?*

CHARLIE TRIED TO CATCH HIS BREATH. IT OCCURRED TO HIM THAT THE STEADY DIET OF BOOZE AND EXERCISE HE'D BEEN EXISTING ON ALL NIGHT DID NOT GO TOGETHER LIKE, SAY, CHOCOLATE CHIP AND COOKIE...

"IT'S... IT'S ALL RIGHT! EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE OKAY. YOU CAN TELL THE RELATIVES UP NORTH THEY CAN LEAVE THEIR MAPLE SYRUP IN THE TREES AND NOT BLACK OUT CITIES OR ANY OF THAT KIND OF STUFF. YOUR MINE WON'T BE HARMED."

"WHY THAT'S MERRY MARVELOUS!," SAID VAN GROOT. "HOW EVER DID YOU MANAGE IT? I

ADMIT I DIDN'T HAVE MUCH CONFIDENCE IN YOU.*

"FRIEND... FRIEND OF MINE WILL PRESENT ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO THE SUBWAY PLANNING BOARD SHOWING THAT THE GROUND, THE AREA FOR THE PROPOSED STATION, IS UNSTABLE. UNSUITABLE FOR PRACTICAL EXCAVATION. IF THEY THINK IT'LL COST THEM ANOTHER FIVE BUCKS, THEY'LL MOVE IT TO THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE TUNNEL. IT WAS ALL A MATTER OF JUST USING THE FACT OF YOUR MINE, NOT TRYING TO PRETEND IT WASN'T THERE. THEY DON'T KNOW IT'S A MINE, OF COURSE."

"SEISMIC TEST?*

"YEAH. HOW DID YOU KNOW?*

"REASONABLE. THREE OF MY BEST PICK GNOMES REPORTED IN EARLIER THIS EVENING WITH MYGRAPNES.*

"SORRY.*

"DON'T GIVE IT NO MIND. SERVES 'EM RIGHT." VAN GROOT CHUCKLED WITH SATISFACTION.

"ANYWAY," CHARLIE CONTINUED, "LIVES, TIME, AND DIFFICULTY CANNOT STOP THE NEW YORK SUBWAY AUTHORITY. BUT MONEY... YEAH, YOUR MINES ARE SAFE, ALL RIGHT.*

"AND SO ARE YOUR PHONE LINES, SO IS THAT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF COMPUTERS.*

"IT'LL BE AN EXPRESS STATION ANYWAY. IT SHOULDN'T BOTHER YOU TOO MUCH," CHARLIE ADDED. HE WAS GETTING GROGGY AGAIN. HIS STOMACH AND BRAIN WERE GANGING UP ON HIM.

"YOU'VE DONE VERY WELL INDEED, MY BOY. I'M SURPRISED AT YOU. IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE ANY HUMAN TRADED FAVORS WITH US.*

"AW, I'LL BET YOU SET THE WHOLE THING UP. ANYWAY I'VE GOT TO BE HONEST ABOUT IT. I DIDN'T DO IT FOR YOU. I DIDN'T DO IT FOR ME EITHER. I... I DID IT,* AND HERE HE STOOD VERY TALL, STRAIGHT, AND PATRIOTIC, "FOR THE TELEPHONE COMPANY! "IT WAS ALL HE COULD DO NOT TO SALUTE.

"BRAVO! I WISH THERE WAS SOMETHING I COULD GIVE YOU. A LITTLE TOKEN, A REMEMBRANCE. I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU COULD USE A NICE SLEEPER?*

"I'M AFRAID NOT. NO CORONATIONS FOR A MONTH, AT LEAST. I'M GOING ON THE WAGON.*

"TOO BAD. WELL, HERE, TAKE THIS, ANYWAY.*

"SURE," SAID CHARLIE AGREEABLY. THE GNOME THRUST SOMETHING INTO HIS RAINCOAT POCKET. "SO LONG, VAN GRAT! IT WAS NICE KNOWING YOU. STOP UP AT MY PLACE SOMETIME. PLAY A COUPLE GAMES O' GI... O'GIN!*

"I MAY DO THAT,* REPLIED VAN GROOT. "SOME NIGHT. I'LL BRING MY OWN DJINN.*

CHARLIE WAS HALF WAY UP THE TUNNEL WHEN HE WHIRLED AT A SUDDEN THOUGHT. "HEY! VAN GREET!*

"YES?*" THE VOICE FLOATED DOWN FAINTLY FROM THE DISTANT BLACKNESS.

"WHAT DID YOU GIVE ME?*

"WHY, A FLAGAN-PHLANGE, OF COURSE.*



HARLIE GIGGLED AS HE THOUGHT ABOUT IT. HE COULDN'T STOP GIGGLING. HOWEVER, IT WASN'T SO FUNNY. THIS MADE HIM NERVOUS AND HE STOPPED. HE WAS JUST ABOUT TO ENTER INTO A SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS MAT

TRESS WHEN THERE WAS A KNOCK AT HIS DOOR. IT REPEATED, INSISTENTLY. IT REFUSED TO GO AWAY.

GRUMBLING HE STUMBLED BLINDLY TO THE DOOR AND PEERED THROUGH THE EYEGLASS. NO ONE JUST OPENS HIS DOOR AT 2 IN THE MORNING IN NEW YORK. SUDDENLY, HE WAS SILENTLY GONE TO SLEEP FOUR HOURS AWAY AND WAS NOW DREAMING. BUT HE OPENED THE DOOR.

IT WAS MISS HIGH PRESSURE AREA.

SHE HAD A ROBE DRAPED LOOSELY OVER A NIGHTGOWN. NO SELF-RESPECTING SPIDER WOULD HAVE OWNED UP TO. CUMULUS FORMATIONS WERE DISTURBINGLY APPARENT.

"CAN I COME IN, MYSTER...UH..."

"DIMS DALE," MUMBLED CHARLIE. CHARLIE DIMS DALE. HE TOOK TWO STEPS BACKWARDS, SINCE HE WAS STILL HOLDING ONTO THE KNOB, THE DOOR CAME WITH HIM.

SHE STEPPED INSIDE, CLOSED IT BEHIND HER. THE ROBE OPENED EVEN MORE. SO DID CHARLIE'S PUPILS. PROPORTIONATELY.

"YOU'RE GOING TO THINK I'M JUST TERRIBLE (THIS WAS A BLATANT FALSEHOOD), BUT...." SHE WAS STARING AT HIM IN THE STRANGEST WAY. "I REALLY CAN'T... EXPLAIN IT. BUT, WELL, IF YOU COULD JUST..."

SHE TOOK A QUICK STEP FORWARD AND THREW HER ARMS AROUND HIM. FOR SOMEONE OUT OF PRACTICE, CHARLIE REACTED WELL. SHE WHISPERS SOMETHING IN HIS EAR. IT WASN'T A WEATHER REPORT. WHAT SHE SAID, SOFTLY, WAS, "IT'LL BE OKAY. HE THINKS I'M IN GENEVA."

CHARLIE HUNG ON AND DIRECTED HER INTO THE APARTMENT, KICKING THE DOOR SHUT BEHIND THEM. HE LISTENED GRAVELY.

NOW HE KNEW WHAT A FLAGAN-PHANGE ATTRACTED.





BOYD COTTLE, COMMANDER STILL SOUNDS FUNNY EVERYONE ON BOARD IS AT LEAST AS NERVOUS AS I AM. THAT IS ONLY TO BE EXPECTED

I HAVE ASSIGNED ADDITIONAL WORK, BELIEVING THAT TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN CALMING POST IGNITION JITTERS THAN A CASUAL DOSE OF CORAPHINE.



AS I MENTIONED, ALL SHIP'S FUNCTIONS ARE OPERATING WITHIN 99.8% OF PRESCRIBED PARAMETERS. EVA ØSTERSUND AND I TRACED THE TWO-TENTHS ERROR TO A MINOR MALFUNCTION IN THE SOLID WASTE RECYCLING CHAMBER. THIS IS A SMALL PROBLEM, BUT IT HAS DENTED MOUTIERS' PROFESSIONAL PRIDE.

DR. OYO IS HELPING HIM WITH THE MATTER AS BEST SHE CAN WITHOUT NEGLECTING HER JOB, WHICH IS PRIMARILY TO KEEP A WARY EYE ON US FIRST DEEP-SPACE TRAVELERS. WE'RE ALL DISGUSTINGLY HEALTHY, SHE INSISTS PHYSICAL FITNESS WAS AS IMPORTANT A CRITERION IN OUR SELECTION AS ANY MENTAL ABILITIES.



ONLY SIXTEEN YEARS, FOUR MONTHS, TWO DAYS TO BARNARD'S STAR... UNLESS THE MOLENOW MULTIPLIER REALLY WORKS. WE'RE NOT OVERLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THAT. HOW AN ALIEN DEVICE ADAPTED FOR HUMAN USE WILL HELP IS BEYOND US. THE EXPERTS CLAIM THAT THE MULTIPLIER REACTS TO MENTAL CUT PUT, TRANSLATING THAT INTO SPACE-TIME DISTORTION LEAPS ALONG OUR LINE OF FLIGHT, BUT EVEN THEY DON'T FULLY UNDERSTAND HOW IT FUNCTIONS. ON DAY TWELVE SESE OYO WILL CONDUCT OUR FIRST "SESSION". BELIEVE ME, THE THOUGHT OF SIX TRAINED SCIENTISTS SQUATTING AROUND MUTTERING "OMS" AT BARNARD'S STAR IS MORE THAN A LITTLE JARRING.

DAY
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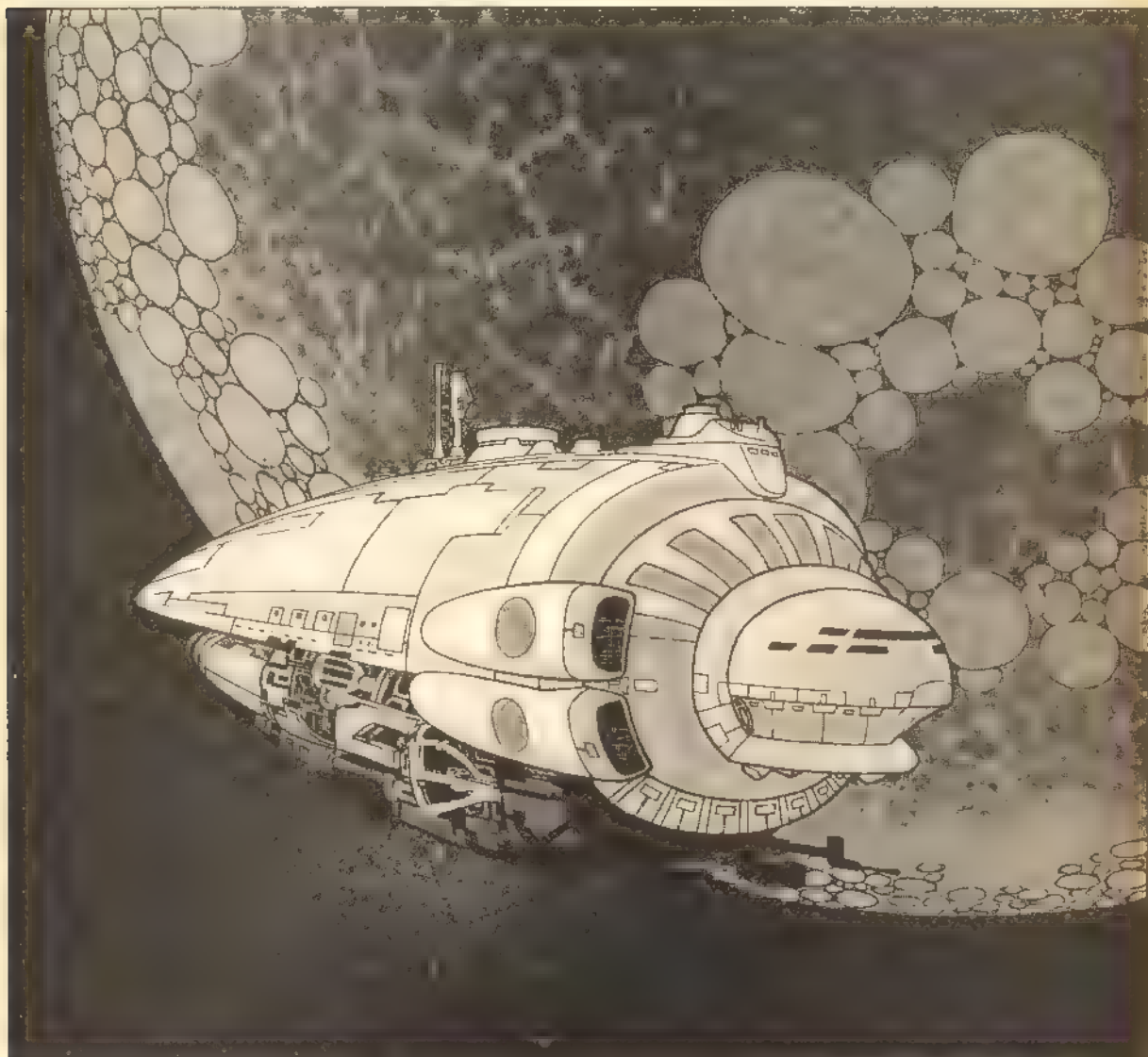


SMOOTH AS VACUUM SO FAR.
MOUTIERS HAS CORRECTED THE
PROBLEM WITH THE SOLID WASTE
RECYCLER. HE'S NOW FIDDLING

HAPPILY WITH HIS HYDROPONICS
HE FIGURES HE HAS THIRTY-TWO
YEARS IN WHICH TO CREATE A
BETTER CANTALOUPE.
KIM RAHMAN PURRS OVER HER
ENGINES WHICH PURR BACK AT HER
OUR RESIDENT STAR-GAZER
PAUL LISAKOS, CAN'T WAIT UNTIL
WE LEAVE THE SOLAR SYSTEM.

ASTROGATOR ØSTERSLUND FOUND A
MINUTE COURSE DEVIATION - NOT
UNEXPECTED THIS EARLY IN OUR
VOYAGE. SHE AND RAHMAN WILL
COLLABORATE ON CORRECTION.

THANK BARSOOM FOR THE CITY
LIGHTS MESSAGE. YES WE ARE "GO"
ASSURE THEM, WITH ALL OF OUR
THANKS.



DAY
CC7



ACCOMPLISHED URANUS PASSBY
AND BEAMED THEM RECORDS AND
MESSAGES; OUR LAST CLOSE
CONTACT WITH CIVILIZATION...

NOW WE ARE TRULY OUTWARD
BOUND.

THE SECOND JUMP IS PERFORM-
ING ABOVE ALL EXPECTATIONS

THRUST

DAY
012



WE JUST CONCLUDED OUR INITIAL SESSION UNDER DR. OYO'S GUIDANCE. THE OVER ALL REACTION SEEMED TO BE ONE OF EMBARRASSMENT. DR. OYO

SAYS THAT REPETITION WILL CLIRE THIS, BUT I'M NOT SO SURE.



DELATED BIRTHDAY GREETINGS FROM KIM RAHMAN TO HER FATHER DOWN IN KUALA LAMPUR. BY THE TIME THIS MESSAGE REACHES HIM HE'LL BE OLDER. RECEIVED BIRTHDAY WISHES

FROM MR. AND MRS. USAKOS FOR PAUL. HE RETURNS THE GREETINGS AND SAYS FOR HIS DAD TO TELL EVERYONE ON THE RUGBY TEAM THAT HE WONT BE BACK IN TIME

FOR THE PLAYOFFS, BUT THAT HE'LL BE BACK TO COACH THEIR KIDS FOR SURE.



OH, BY THE WAY, THE MOLENON MULTIPLIER WORKS. ØSTERSUND INFORMS ME THAT OUR SPEED HAS INCREASED BY A FACTOR OF...WELL, CHECK THE READOUTS WE'RE BEAM-

ING BACK TO YOU. WHAT IT MEANS IS THAT THIS WONDERFULLY COMPLEX, ALTERED, ALIEN GIZMO YOU'VE HAD US TRUCK PAST PLUTO WILL GET US TO BARNARD'S STAR EXACTLY TWO

HOURS, FOUR MINUTES EARLIER THAN PREDICTED. SO MUCH FOR THE "GIFT OF THE ALIENS."

DR. OYO SAYS WE CAN DO MUCH BETTER AT OUR SESSIONS. SURE WE CAN.

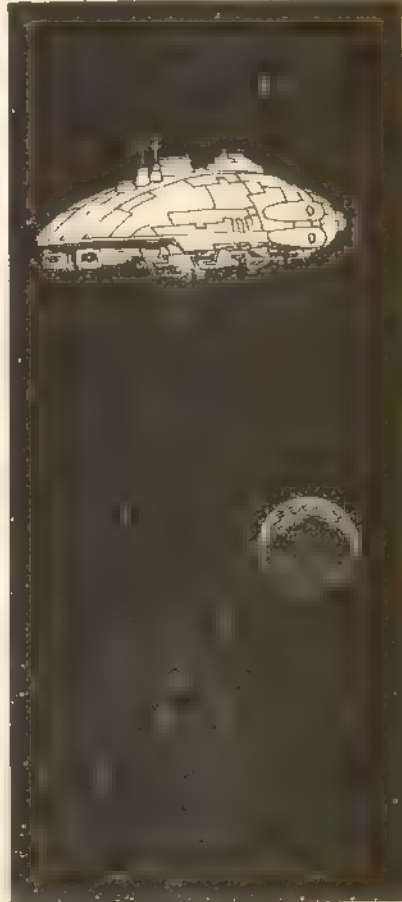
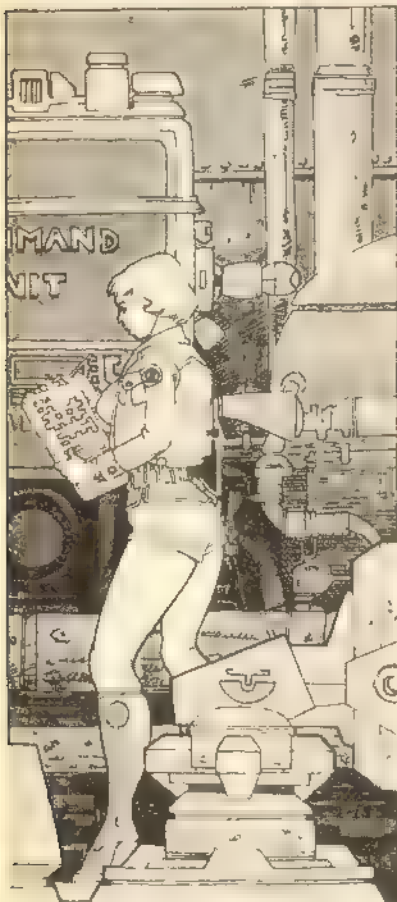
DAY 019

08:27

DR OYO SAYS THAT OUR GROWING BOREDOM IS TO BE EXPECTED, IT WILL PASS AS WE SETTLE MORE

FULLY INTO IN-FLIGHT ROUTINE. I HAVE TO CONFESS THAT I'M A BIT WORRIED. ALL OF THE WORK AND GAMES THAT ARE AVAILABLE SEEM INADEQUATE TO RELIEVE THE PRESENT DISENCHANTMENT. THERE'VE BEEN NO OUTWARD SIGNS OF DISCONTENT. WE'RE ALL

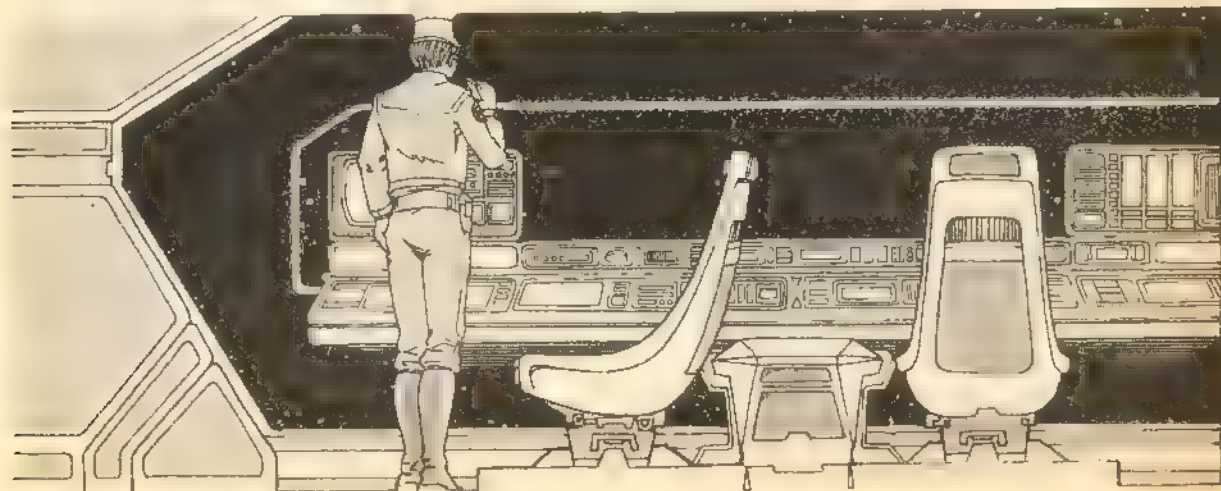
TOO MENTALLY STABLE FOR THAT, BUT I CAN TELL WHEN SOMEONE IS ENJOYING THEMSELF, AND WHEN THEY'RE JUST GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS. EVEN K.M. RAHMAN'S JEWELRY AND SCULPTURE IS SUFFERING. PAUL IS TRYING TO HELP INSPIRE HER



ANOTHER SESSION TODAY DR.OYO SOUNDED PLEASED ØSTERSJØND DISCOVERED ANOTHER SLIGHT JUMP IN OUR POSITION. WE'LL NOW ARRIVE AT OUR DESTINATION THREE DAYS,SIX

HOURS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE. I'M NOT IMPRESSED. IF THE MULTIPLIER CAN'T DO BETTER THAN SHAVE THREE DAYS OFF A SIXTEEN YEAR TRIP, I PERSONALLY DON'T HOLD

MUCH HOPE FOR ITS FUTURE BENEFITS TO MANKIND IN REGARDS TO INTERSTELLAR TRAVEL.



DAY
C33

06:44

IT APPEARS WE HAVE TO DEVOTE

MORE AND MORE TIME TO SIMPLY STAYING SANE. AS EVER, THE SECOND JUMP RUNS LIKE A FINE TIME PIECE. MANKIND CAN BE PROUD OF THIS SHIP. WILL THEY BE ABLE TO BE AS PROUD OF US?

I AM TROUBLED BY UNPLEASANT PROSPECTS. DR. OYO ASCRIBES MY WORRY TO MY POSITION AS COMMANDER, MY BURDEN OF RESPONSIBILITY.



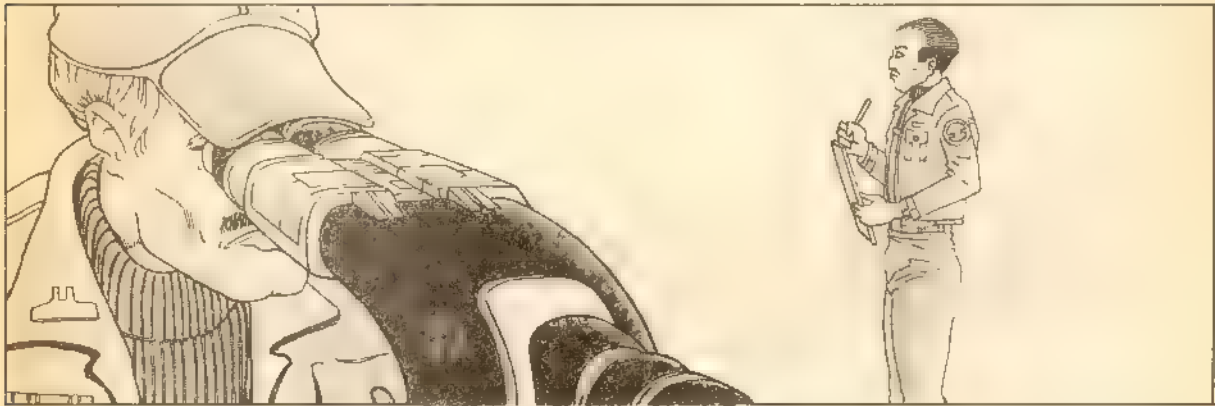
DAY
C45

22:35

MOUTIERS HAS DISCOVERED MINUTE TRACES OF A COMPLEX PROTEIN CHAIN WHICH SHOULDN'T

BE IN OUR FOOD. HE'S PERSONALLY UNFAMILIAR WITH THE CHAIN AND HAS NO RECORD OF IT IN THE CHEMICAL LOG. IT'S THIS LACK OF A RECORD WHICH TROUBLES HIM. HE'S ASSURED ME THAT THE PROTEINS ARE HARMLESS AND MAY EVEN BE A BENIGN ADDITIVE

WHICH SOMEONE NEGLECTED TO LIST IN THE LOG OR COMPUTER. AS HE WAS POSITIVE THE PROTEINS WEREN'T HARMFUL I TOLD HIM NOT TO WORRY AND SUGGESTED HE TRY TO IDENTIFY THE STUFF IN HIS SPARE TIME. IF NOTHING ELSE IT WILL GIVE HIM SOMETHING TO DO.



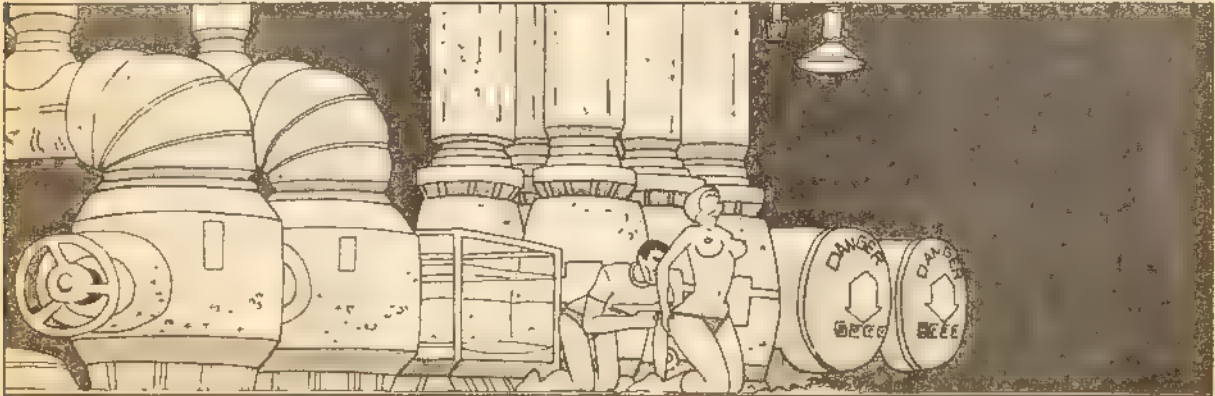
DAY
C55

08:48

I WENT TO ASK MOUTIERS ABOUT THE

MYSTERIOUS PROTEIN HE DISCOVERED TEN DAYS AGO. HE WAS NOT AT HIS STATION. I EXPECTED TO FIND HIM IN THE HYDROPONICS CHAMBERS WHICH I DID. BOTH HE AND KIM RAHMAN. I BACKED OUT QUIETLY.

NATURALLY I HAD NO OBJECTION TO MOUTIERS AND RAHMAN ENJOYING THEMSELVES. NO ONE EXPECTED THIS CREW OF YOUNG, HEALTHY GENIUSES WOULD REMAIN CELIBATE FOR THIRTY-TWO YEARS.



DAY 062



PROF. RAHMAN AND MOUTIERS ARE NEGLECTING THEIR ASSIGNMENTS REGULARLY NOW. THEY'RE SPENDING ALMOST ALL THEIR

NON-ESSENTIAL TIME IN ONE ANOTHER'S CABIN. RAHMAN HAS BEEN USING HER PERSONAL SCULPTING AND JEWELRY-MAKING EQUIPMENT TO FASHION OBJECTS OF A NATURE I PREFER NOT TO DISCUSS AT THIS TIME.

I WAS DEEPLY TROUBLED AT THIS FIRST ACTUAL BREAK IN

DISCIPLINE, AND ARRANGED ANOTHER PRIVATE SESSION WITH DR. OYO. SHE REASSURED AND RELAXED ME, AS SHE ALWAYS DOES. WHY WORRY SO LONG AS THE SHIP WAS OPERATING EFFICIENTLY? AT LEAST THE BOREDOM OF TWO CREWMEMBERS HAD BEEN ALLEVIATED.



DAY 064



PAUL USAKOS, OUR ASTRONOMER, IS DISCUSSING ASTROGATION

WITH EVA ØSTERSUND. HAS BEEN FOR SOME TIME, IT NOW SEEMS. WHILE THE SECOND JUMP SHOWS NO ILL EFFECTS FROM THEIR NEGLIGENCE, THE ABSENCE OF CONSTANT MONITORING OF COURSE AND SPEED CONCERNS

ME. I HAVE BEEN TRYING TO COMPENSATE QUIETLY BY TAKING OVER SOME OF ØSTERSUND'S AND USAKOS' FUNCTIONS.

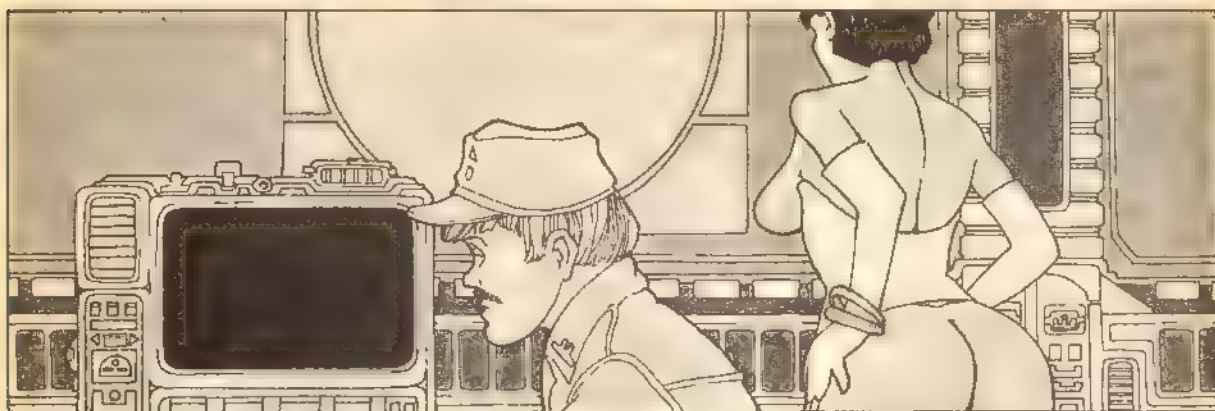
THE OVERWORK HAS DR. OYO WORRYING ABOUT ME.



ANOTHER SESSION WITH HER
YESTERDAY. SHE IS A CONSUMMATE
PROFESSIONAL AND WE ARE

FORTUNATE TO HAVE HER ON
BOARD. IT IS BECOMING
INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT FOR ME

TO IGNORE THE FACT THAT FOR
SOMEONE WITH THREE ADVANCED
DEGREES, DR. OYO IS REALLY BUILT.



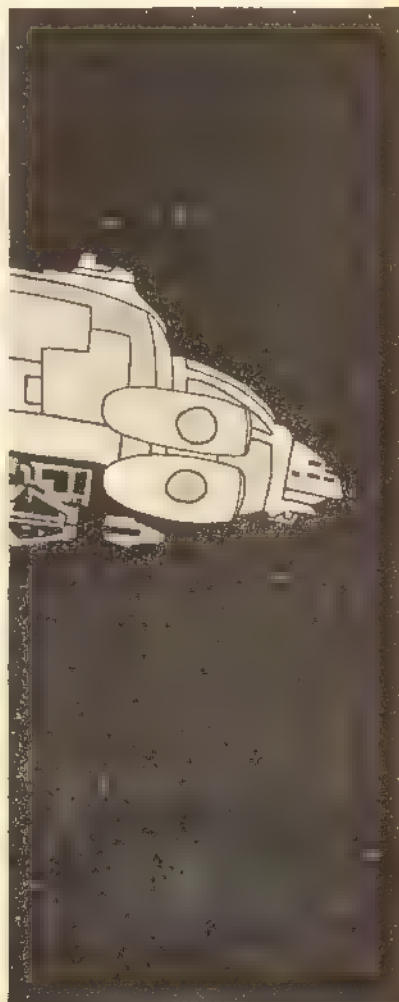
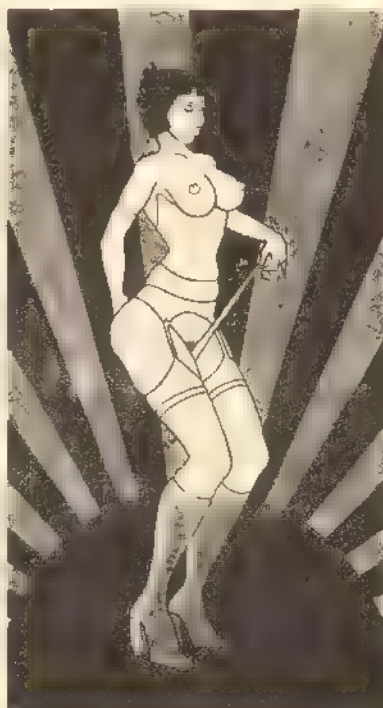
DAY
068



THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH

THE SHIP, BUT NOONE SEEMS TO
CARE. ØSTERSUND MUMBLED
SOMETHING ABOUT UNEXPECTED
DISTORTION OF THE STELLAR
MATRIX, BUT SHE WASN'T
PARTICULARLY COHERENT. I DID

ATTEMPT TO DISCOVER THE
NATURE OF THE DISTORTION BUT
BEFORE I COULD BEGIN I WAS
INTERRUPTED BY DR. OYO.



I AM DISTURBED AT THE APPARENT
COLLAPSE OF SHIP ROUTINE, BUT
THE SECOND JUMP IGNORES US. IT

CONTINUES PLACIDLY ON ITS
ASSIGNED COURSE. I CONFESS
DR. OYO'S INTERRUPTION WAS NOT

WHOLELY UNWELCOME. SESE
ALWAYS KNOWS HOW TO MAKE ME
FEEL BETTER.

DAY
C73

02:01

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG WHILE WE HAD ANOTHER GROUP SESSION. THIS TIME IT DID NOT INVOLVE MEDITATION. ALL SIGNS OF MOROSENESS AND BOREDOM HAVE VANISHED. I FEEL MYSELF SLIPPING FURTHER FROM REALITY.



DAY
C80

00:10

JEAN-JACQUES HAS DISCOVERED A HOST OF NEW PROTEINS NOT LISTED IN HIS CATALOG FROM TIME TO TIME HE AND I WONDER ABOUT THEIR PRESENCE IN A BASAL FOOD SUPPLY AS CAREFULLY COMPOSED AS THE SECONDJUMPS.



DAY
C83

11:04

EVA ØSTERSUND AND PAUL USAKOS ARE TWO-THIRDS OF THE WAY THROUGH A DRAMATIC VERSION OF THE KAMA SUTRA. THE REST OF US ARE INVENTING SOME TRICKS OF OUR OWN, AND HAVING A GREAT TIME!



DAY
C84

04:44

DAY
C85

02:10

OH, WOW!

TURNED OFF THE CENTRIFUGE YESTERDAY WE'RE ALL ENJOYING FREE-FALL, BUT I DON'T THINK OUR MUSCLE TONE WILL SUFFER. ZERO GRAVITY PERMITS VARIATIONS SIR

RICHARD BURTON COULD NEVER HAVE ENVISIONED. NIM RAHMAN IS PRODUCING SOME REMARKABLE DEVICES IN HER WORKSHOP.

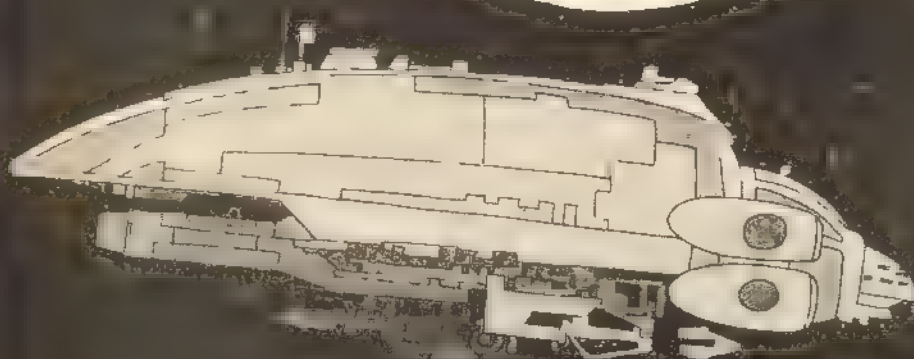
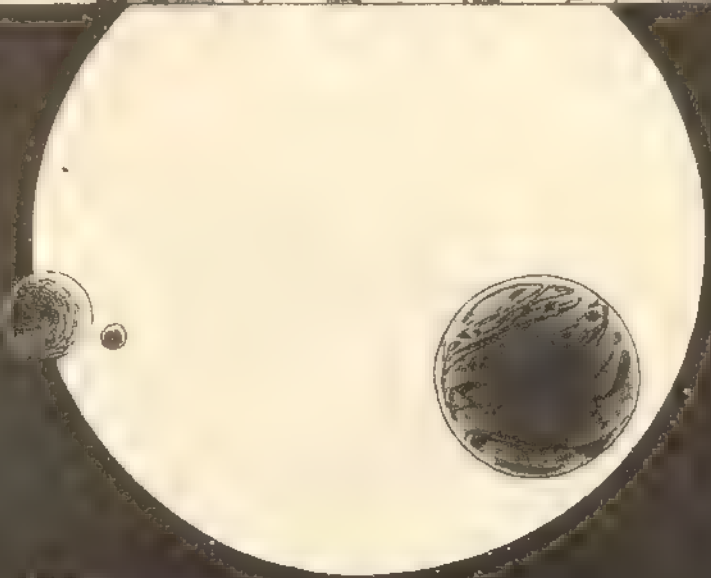
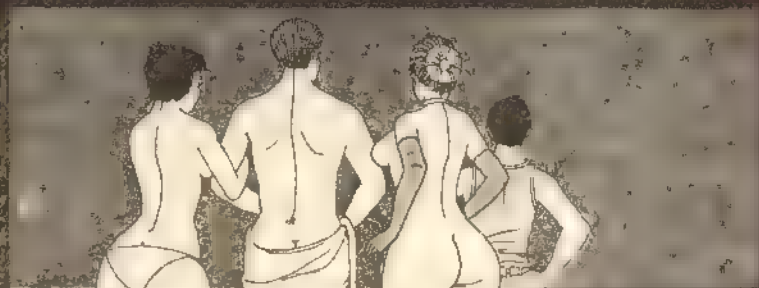


DAY
091



I CAN'T EXPLAIN IT. NONE OF US CAN.
THE SECOND JUMP HAS STOPPED.
THERE IS A SUN BLAZING OUTSIDE
WHICH CAN ONLY BE BARNARD'S
STAR. THIS DISCOVERY WAS EXTRA-

ORDINARY ENOUGH TO INDUCE US TO
RETURN TO OUR STATIONS.
NO QUESTION ABOUT IT, WE'VE
REACHED BARNARD'S STAR. THERE
ARE SIX PLANETS NOTED ON FIRST



SURVEY, AND TWO. TWO OF THEM
ARE EARTH LIKE. THERE IS ALSO A
CHANCE, PAUL TELLS ME, THAT THE
SIXTH MOON OF THE FIFTH PLANET IS
MARGINALLY HABITABLE. THIS

EXCEEDS THE WILDEST HOPES OF
EVERY ONE OF US, AND I'M SURE OF
EVERYONE BACK ON EARTH. WE ARE
SIXTEEN YEARS, ONE MONTH
AHEAD OF SCHEDULE ... ALL WE

CAN ASSUME IS THAT THE MOLENDON
MULTIPLIER WORKS LIKE NOBODY'S
BUSINESS. MY APOLOGIES TO ALL
CONCERNED WITH THAT PART OF
THE PROJECT.

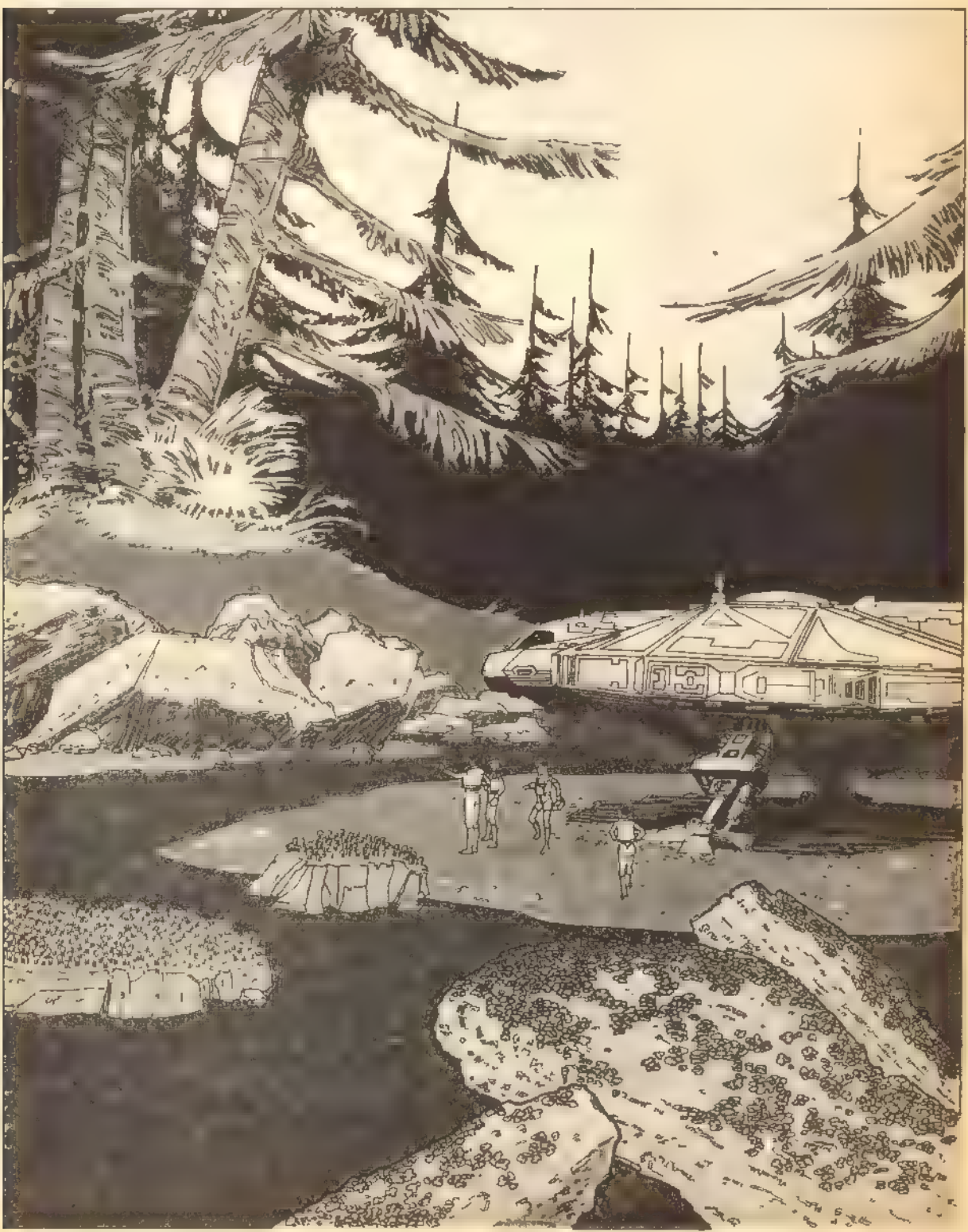
DAY 093



JEAN JACQUES, KIM, PAUL AND SESE HAVE TAKEN THE LANDER DOWN TO THE SURFACE OF BARNARD III, WHICH WE HAVE

NAMED AFTER JEAN-JACQUES' SUGGESTION, LA DIFFÉRENCE LET THE HISTORIANS HAVE THAT ONE TO CHEW ON IN YEARS TO COME. LA DIFFÉRENCE, BY THE WAY, IS MORE THAN NINE TENTHS EARTH-LIKE IT HAS A SLIGHTLY HIGHER GRAVITY, BUT OTHERWISE IS A PARADISE ACCORDING TO REPORTS

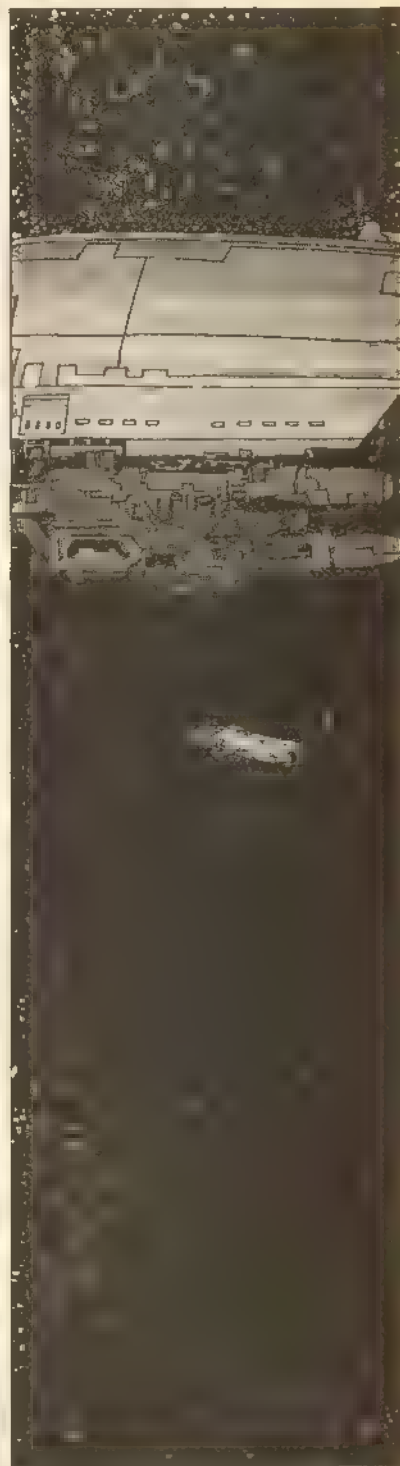
FROM BELOW NO LIFE HIGHER THAN THE LOWER INVERTEBRATES EVA AND I HAVE BEEN WORKING THE COMPUTER OVERTIME TRYING TO DISCOVER THE REASON FOR THE INCREDIBLE, SUDDEN SUCCESS OF THE MOLENOON MULTIPLE. I BELIEVE WE HAVE FOUND THE ANSWER.





JEAN-JACQUES AND SESE HAVE BROUGHT THE LANDER UP TO DISGORGE SPECIMENS AND TAKE ON FRESH SUPPLIES. JEAN-JACQUES TOOK A COUPLE OF

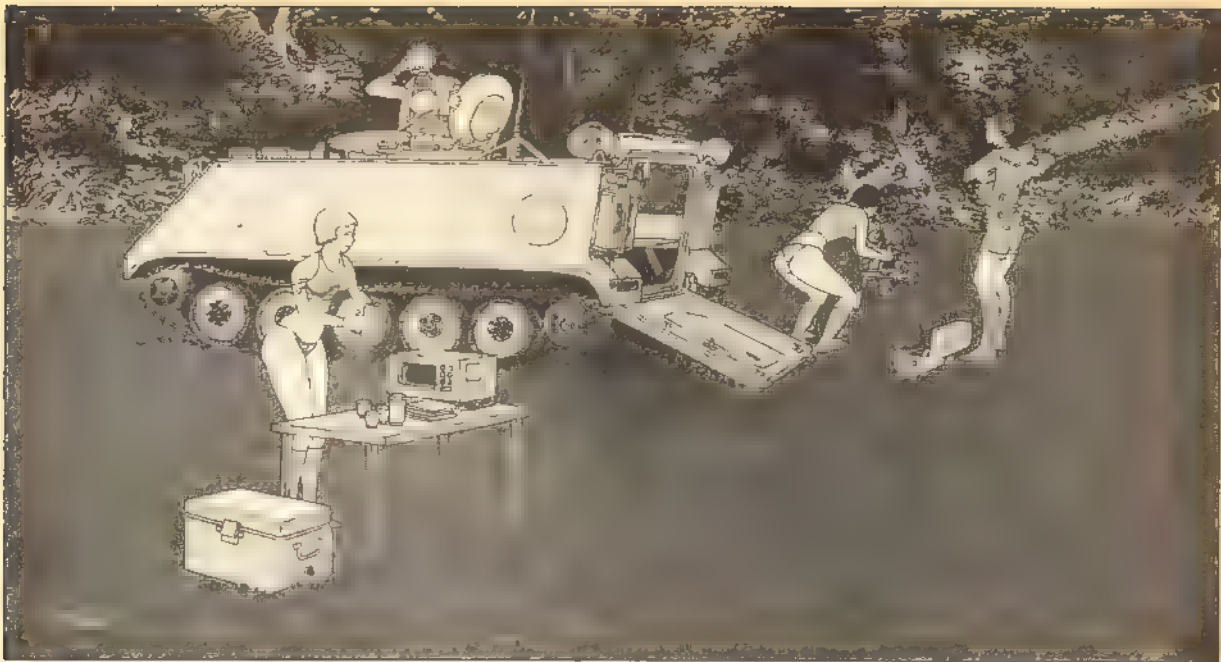
HOURS AND FINALLY IDENTIFIED THOSE MYSTERIOUS PROTEINS - A RELATIVELY SIMPLE JOB NOW THAT HE HAD AN IDEA OF WHAT TO LOOK FOR.



REALLY I DON'T THINK ALL THOSE PHEROMES AND APHRODISIACS WERE NECESSARY. SESE THOUGHT THAT IF WE'D BEEN TOLD THAT THE BEST THEORETICAL WAY TO OPERATE THE

MULTIPLIER WAS TO, UH, TRY AND MULTIPLY OUR INHIBITIONS MIGHT HAVE FINISHED US BEFORE WE GOT STARTED. UNDISTORTED MENTAL OUTPUT ENGAGES THE SPACE-TIME

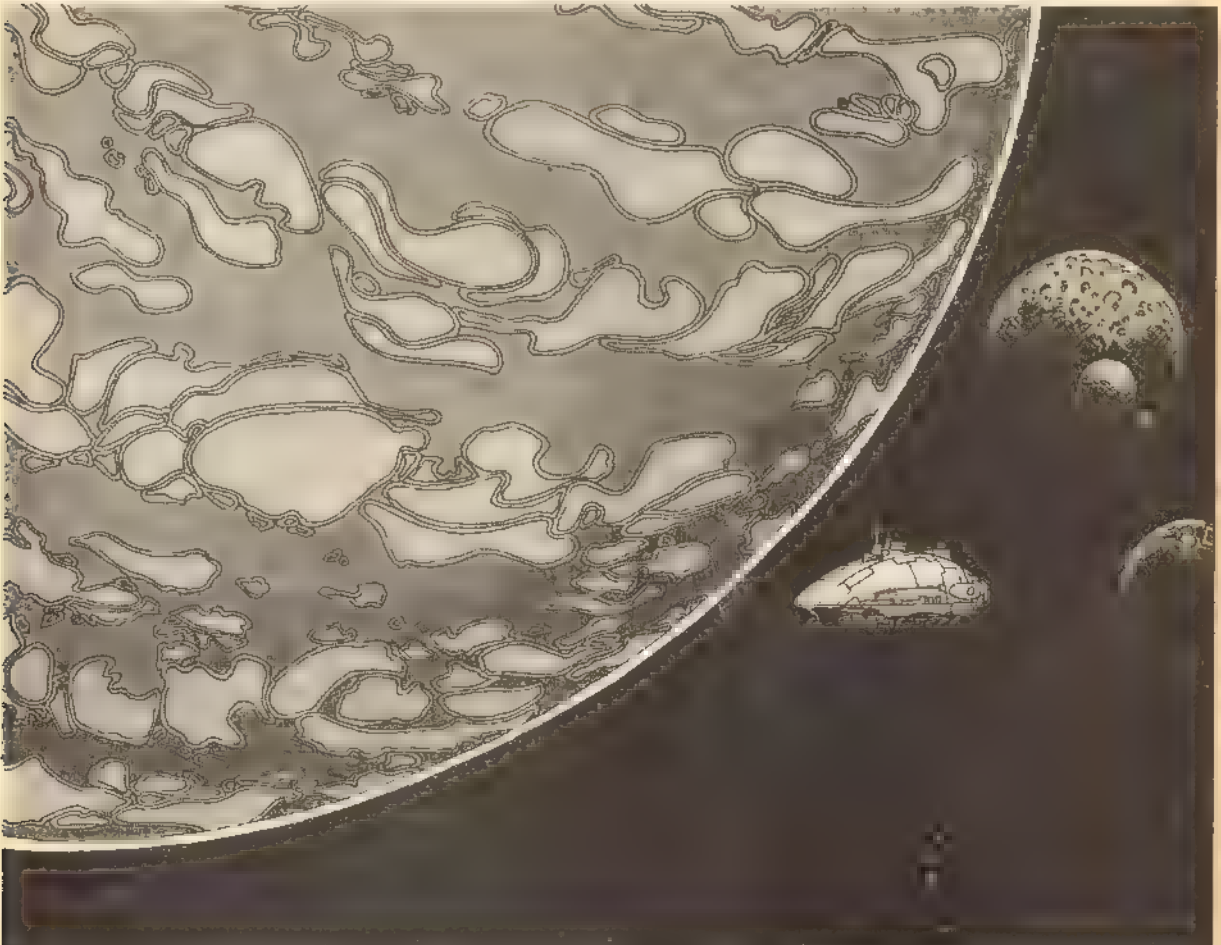
DISTORTION FUNCTIONING OF THE MOLENON MULTIPLIER THAT OUTPUT PEAKS DURING THE ACT OF SEX. SCORE ONE FOR THE BRAIN BOYS BACK HOME. BUT I'M STILL NOT SURE I LIKE HAVING BEEN TRICKED INTO IT.



THIS WOULD ALL BE FUNNY IF IT
WEREN'T SO WONDERFULLY
EFFICIENT. BARNARD IS ALSO
INHABITABLE. I WILL NOT TELL YOU
WHAT EVA AND I NAMED IT, BUT THE
REST OF THE CREW CONCURRED.

I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING
HOW THE MEDIA COPE WITH IT.
GENTLEMEN, THIS IS A HELL OF
A WAY TO RUN A STARSHIP. WE'LL
BE RETURNING HOME SHORTLY,
AS SOON AS WE'VE THOROUGHLY

FINISHED OUR EXPLORATION HERE.
PAUL WILL PLAY RUGBY AGAIN
AFTER ALL ... THE REST OF US
ARE GOING TO DO OUR DAMDEST
TO GET HIM HOME IN TIME FOR THE
PLAYOFFS ...



NOVELS, & NOVELIZATIONS COLLECTIONS

The Tar-Arim Krang	Ballantine books, 1972
Bloodhype	Ballantine books, 1973
Isorrigger	Ballantine books, 1974
Luana	Ballantine books, 1974
Dark Star	Ballantine books, 1974
Star Trek Log One	Ballantine books, 1974
Star Trek Log Two	Ballantine books, 1974
Star Trek Log Three	Ballantine books, 1975
Star Trek Log Four	Ballantine books, 1975
Star Trek Log Five	Ballantine books, 1975
Midworld	Science-fiction book club, 1975
	Ballantine books, 1976
Star Trek Log Six	Ballantine books, 1976
Star Trek Log Seven	Ballantine books, 1976
Star Trek Log Eight	Ballantine books, 1976
Star Trek Log Nine	Ballantine books, 1977
Orphan Star	Ballantine books, 1977
The End of the Matter	Del Rey books, 1977
With Friends Like These	Del Rey books, 1977 (collection)
Star Trek Log Ten	Del Rey books, 1978
Splinter of the Mind's Eye	Del Rey books, 1978
	Science-Fiction book club, 1978
Mission to Moulokin	Science Fiction book club, 1979
	Del Rey books, 1979
Alien	Warner books, 1979
Cachalot	Del Rey books, 1979

SHORT FICTION

- With Friends Like These; Analog June 1971
- The 1972 Annual World's Best SF; ed. Wollheim
- Some Notes Concerning a Green Box; The Arkham Collector, Summer 1971
- Why Johnny Can't Speed; Galaxy, September 1971
- The Emoman; Worlds of IF, October 1972

- Space Opera; Adam, February 1973
- Pipe Dream; Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine, September 1973—Alfred Hitchcock Presents: Stories to be read with the door locked. Random House, 1973
- The Empire of T'ang Lang; The Alien Condition (anth., ed. Goldin) Ballantine Books, 1973
- A Miracle of Small Fishes; Stellar 1 (anth., ed. del Rey), Ballantine Books 1974
- Dream Done Green; Fellowship of the Stars (anth., ed. Carr), Simon & Schuster, 1974
- Best Science Fiction Stories of the Year (anth., ed. del Rey), Dutton, 1975
- HE: Fantasy & Science Fiction, June 1976
- Wolfstroker (abridged version); COQ, March 1974
- Swamp Planet Christmas; Art & Story #2, August 1976
- Rolonsae; Beyond Time (anth., ed. Lay) Pocket Books, 1976
- To Who Would Sing; Galileo #2, December 1976
- WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE, anthology, Ballantine/Del Rey, 1977, contains all the above except Swamp Planet Xmas & Pipe Dream
- Snake Eyes; Stellar 4 (anth., ed. del Rey), Del Rey books, June 1978
- The Chair; Shadows 2 (anth., ed. C. Grant) Doubleday
- Bystander; Isaac Asimov's Adventure Mag. Summer 78, issue #1

AUDIOVISUAL WORKS

- Twelve short radio plays, scenes from American History; Audio Bi-Ling, Sweet Home Oregon, 1973
- Star Trek record, original scripts; Passage to Moauv, In Vino Verita, The Crier in Emptiness; Power Records, 1975
- Star Trek record, original scripts, To Starve a Fleaver, The Logistics of Stampede, A Mirror for Futility; Power Records 1976
- STAR TREK—THE MOTION PICTURE; Original story treatment, 1978



ALAN DEAN FOSTER

Born in New York City in 1946, Foster was raised in Los Angeles, California. After receiving a bachelor's degree in Political Science and a Master's of Fine Arts in Motion Pictures from UCLA in 1968-9, he worked for two years as a public relations copywriter in a small Studio City, Calif. firm.

His writing career began when August Derleth bought a long letter of Foster's in 1968 and published it as a short story in his biannual **Arkham Collector Magazine**. Sales of short fiction to other magazines followed. His first try at a novel, **The Tar-Aiyem Krang**, was published by Ballantine Books in 1972.

In addition to the **Arkham Collector**, Foster's sometimes humorous, occasionally poignant, but always entertaining short stories have appeared in such magazines as **Analog**, **If**, **Galaxy**, **Fantasy & Fiction**, **Galileo**, **Isaac Asimov's**, **Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine**, **Adam**, **Art & Story**, and **COQ**, as well as in original anthologies and several "Best of the Year" collections. A collection, **With Friends Like These**, was published by Del Ray books in 1977.

Much of Foster's longer work takes place within the framework of a future society known as the Universe of the Commonwealth, where mankind has forged a semi-symbiotic relationship with a race of insects, the Thranx. In addition to publication in the United States and the rest of the English-speaking world, these novels of high adventure have been translated into Dutch, German, Italian, Spanish and Flemish. Foster is also the author of several movie novelizations such as **Dark Star** and **Lunar**, besides the ten volume **Star Trek Log** series. The latter have sold over 1½ million copies in the U.S. alone. Among his other works are talking records, radio and screenplays, the sequel novel to the film **Star Wars** (**Splinter Of The Mind's Eye**), and the story for **Star Trek Two—The Movie**.

Though restricted (for now) to one world, Foster's love for the far-away and exotic has led him to travel extensively through Asia and the isles of the Pacific, including a sojourn in Tahiti where he lived with the family of a local gendarme. Besides traveling, he

enjoys both classical and rock music, old films (particularly animation and documentary), basketball, body surfing, and karate. He has taught screenwriting, literature and film history at UCLA and Los Angeles City College.

Currently he resides in Big Bear Lake, California with his wife JoAnn (who was raised forty miles from Robert E. Howard's home town of Cross Plains, Texas). She is reputed to have the only extant recipe for Barbarian Cream Pie. They share a many-roomed home with three cats (Saturn, Mittens, and Orca), three dogs (Sasha, Pepper, and Valentine), two hundred house plants who assisted in the writing of **Midworld**, assorted renegade coyotes and raccoons, and the ensorcelled chair of the nefarious Dr. John Dee.

Foster is presently at work on several new novels and film projects.



A very special thanks to Virginia Kidd who was so helpful from the beginning.

METROGNOME

WHY JOHNNY CAN'T SPEED

WHERE DO YOU GET THOSE IDEAS?

THRUST

Cover by Tom Nesbitt
Contents Page by Ken Steacy
Back Cover by Peter Hsu

GODDAMN IT
MYRTLE
I TOLD HIM!
I TOLD HIM!

WHATTA YOU TELL A KID
LIKE THAT, MYRT?
HOW DO YOU GET
THROUGH TO HIM?



'LOOK, SON. IF YOU INSIST
ON DRIVING ALL THE WAY
TO DIEGO BY YOURSELF,
AT LEAST TAKE THE PONTIAC!
HAVE SOME **SENSE**. I TOLD
HIM! I DON'T KNOW
WHAT'S WITH THE KIDS
THESE DAYS, HON. YOU'D
THINK HE'D LISTEN TO ME
JUST THIS ONCE, WOULDN'T
YOU? ME, WHO ONCE
DROVE ALL THE WAY FROM
INDIANAPOLIS TO L.A. AND
WAS CHALLENGED ONLY
TWICE ON THE WAY—**ONLY
TWICE**, MYRT! BUT NO, HE
HADDA BE A **BIG SHOT**!
'LISTEN DAD THIS IS
SOMETHING I'VE GOT TO
WORK OUT FOR MYSELF.
WITH MY OWN CAR.' HE
TELLS ME! I KNEW HE'D
HAVE TROUBLE IN THAT
VW AND I OFTEN TOLD
HIM SO, TOO.

BUT NO, ALL HE COULD
THINK OF WAS TO SAY,
'POPS, THE WORST THAT
CAN HAPPEN IS I'VE GOTTA
OUTMANEUVER SOME OTHER
CAR, RIGHT? YOU'VE SEEN
THE WAY THAT FLUG
CORNERS, HAVEN'T YOU,
HUH? AND IF I GET
INTO A TOUGH SCRAPE,
ANY OTHER VW ON THE
ROAD IS BOUND BY
OATH TO SUPPORT ME,
—IN **MOST ACTIONS**
ANYWAY.

I DON'T KNOW EITHER,
DEAR. I STILL DON'T
UNDERSTAND WHY HE
HAD TO DRIVE DOWN
THERE. WHY COULDN'T
HE HAVE TAKEN
THE **TRANS**, FRANK?
WHY?

OH, YOU KNOW WHY. WHAT
WOULD HIS '**FRIENDS**' HAVE
SAID? 'HERE'S BOBBY MERWIN,
TOO SCARED TO DRIVE HIS
OWN **ROD**' AND THAT SORT OF
CRUD. STILL FELT HE HAD TO
PROVE HIMSELF A MAN, THE
IDIOT! HE'D ALREADY SOLOED
ON THE FREEWAYS—WHY DID
HE FEEL THE NEED TO TRY A
CROSS-COUNTRY EXPEDITION?
BUT DAMN IT, IF HE HAD TO
DISPLAY HIS GUTS, WHY
COULDN'T HE DAVE DONE SO
IN THE **BIG CAR**? NOT EVEN
A PROFESSIONALLY
CUSTOMIZED VW CAN MOUNT
MUCH STUFF.

AND ON TOP OF EVERYTHING
ELSE, YOU'D THINK HE'D HAVE
HAD THE SENSE TO SHY OFF
THAT KIND OF AN ARGUMENT?
HE HAD DRIVERS TRAINING!
WHO EVER HEARD OF A VW
DISPUTING POSITION WITH A
CAD-A MARAUDER, NO LESS!
WHERE WERE HIS '**FRIENDS**,
HUH? I WARNED HIM ABOUT
THE LIGHT STRETCHES
BETWEEN HERE AND
DIEGO, WHERE FLOW IS
LIGHT, HELP IS MORE THAN
A HORNBLAST AWAY
AND SOME PSYCHO CAN
SURPRISE YOU FROM
BEHIND AN ON-RAMP!



YOU KNOW WHAT
I HAVE TO DO
NOW. I SUPPOSE?



BOB WAS TAKING THAT GIFT TO A FRIEND IN DIEGO. I'M BOUND TO SEE THAT IT'S DELIVERED.



I DON'T SUPPOSE

NO, HON, I'M TAKING IT DOWN MYSELF I REFUSE TO SHIP IT AND I CERTAINLY WON'T RIDE THE TRANS. NOT AFTER ALL THESE YEARS.



NO, I'M GOING DOWN THE SAME WAY BOB WENT, BY THE SAME ROUTE. I'LL HAVE THE JJ TUNED FIRST THOUGH



I SUPPOSE YOU'LL AT LEAST TAKE IT IN TO...

HECTOR? CERTAINLY IN SPITE OF WHAT HE CHARGES, HE'S DAMN WELL WORTH THE MONEY. BEST MECHANIC AROUND I ENJOY DOING BUSINESS WITH HIM, KNOW I'M GETTING MY CREDITS WORTH, AT LEAST. WE COULDN'T HAVE ME GOING SOMEWHERE ELSE-NOW COULD WE? WOULDN'T WANT HIM TO GET THE IDEA WE'RE PREJUDICED OR SOMETHING. I'VE BEEN GOING TO HIM FOR OH, FIVE YEARS. ALMOST FORGOTTEN WHAT HE IS



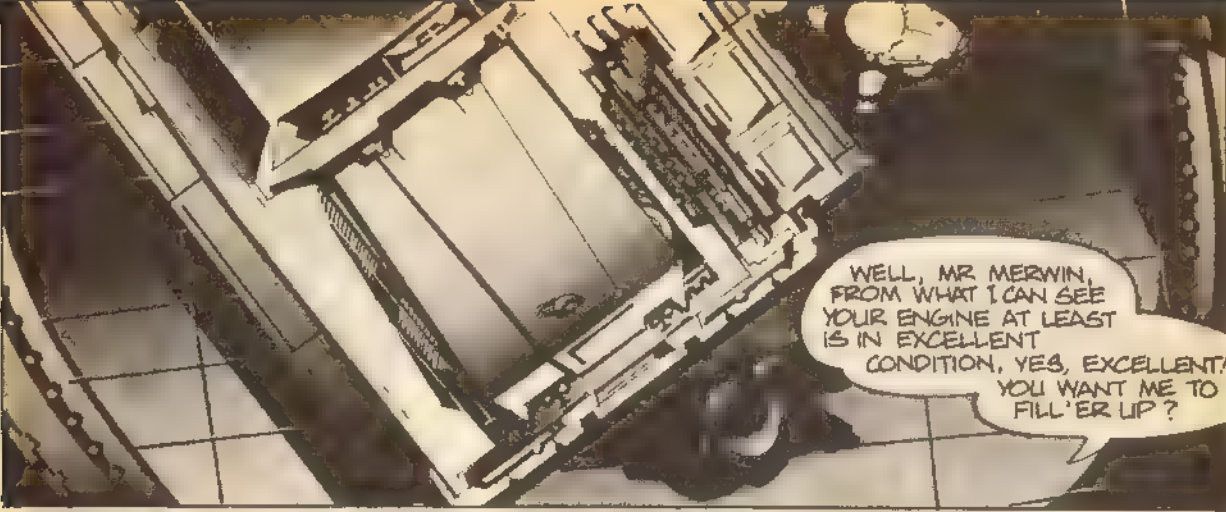
GOING ALL THE WAY DOWN TO DIEGO EH, MR. MERWIN?

YEAH SO YOU'LL UNDERSTAND HECTOR, WHEN I SAY THE JJ'S GOT TO BE IN TIPTOP SHAPE.

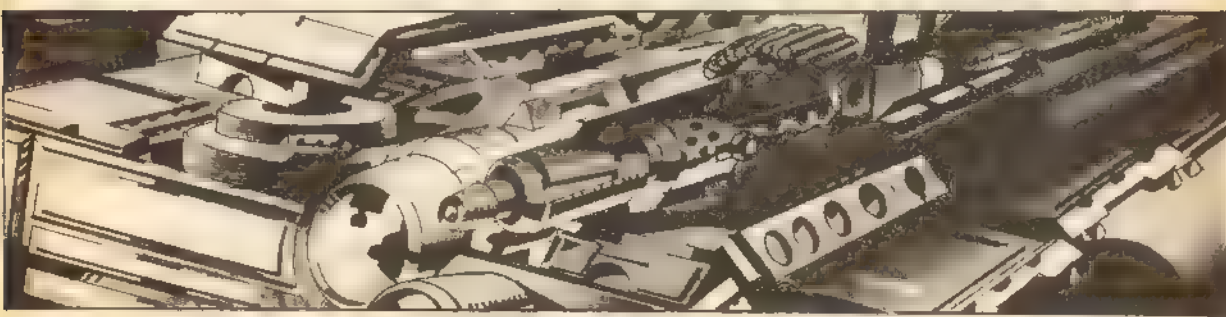


CIERTAMENTE! YOU WANT TO OPEN HER UP, PLEASE?

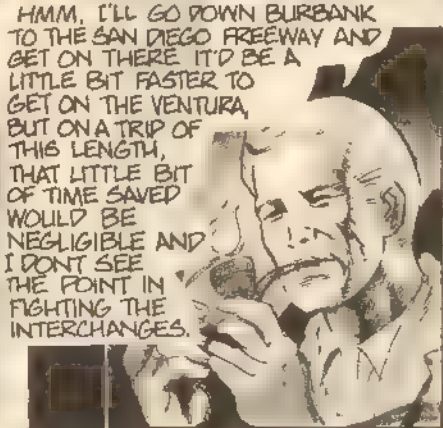




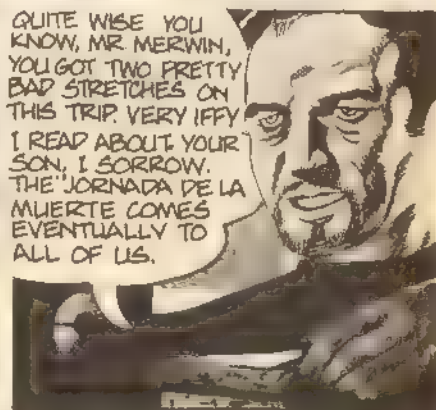
WELL, MR MERWIN,
FROM WHAT I CAN SEE
YOUR ENGINE AT LEAST
IS IN EXCELLENT
CONDITION, YES, EXCELLENT!
YOU WANT ME TO
FILL'ER UP?



IF I
MAY ASK, HOW
DO YOU PLAN
TO GO?



HMM, I'LL GO DOWN BURBANK
TO THE SAN DIEGO FREEWAY AND
GET ON THERE. IT'D BE A
LITTLE BIT FASTER TO
GET ON THE VENTURA,
BUT ON A TRIP OF
THIS LENGTH,
THAT LITTLE BIT OF
TIME SAVED
WOULD BE
NEGLECTIBLE AND
I DON'T SEE
THE POINT IN
FIGHTING THE
INTERCHANGES.



QUITE WISE YOU
KNOW, MR MERWIN,
YOU GOT TWO PRETTY
BAD STRETCHES ON
THIS TRIP. VERY IFFY
I READ ABOUT YOUR
SON, I SORROW.
THE 'JORNADA DE LA
MUERTE COMES
EVENTUALLY TO
ALL OF US.

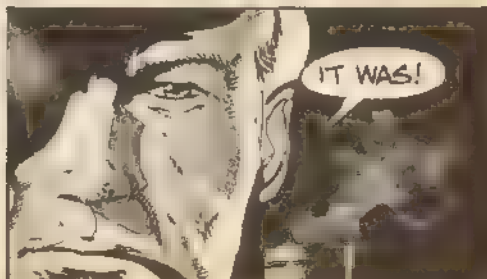


COULDN'T BE HELPED, BOB DIDN'T
REALIZE WHAT WAS - WHAT HE WAS
GETTING INTO, THAT'S ALL. I BLAME
MYSELF, TOO, BUT WHAT COULD I DO?
HE WAS EIGHTEEN AND BY LAW
THERE WASN'T ANYTHING I COULD
DO TO HOLD HIM BACK.

HE SIMPLY
TOOK ON MORE
THAN HE
COULD HANDLE.



A CAD
WASN'T
IT?



IT WAS!

WHAT ARE YOU
GIVING ME-EXPLOSIVES
OR ARMOUR-PIERCING?

MIXED!

BOTH, ALTERNATING SEQUENCE. TRUE,
IT'S MORE EXPENSIVE, BUT AFTER ALL,
YOUR SON'S CAR WAS DESTROYED
BY A MARAUDER-A BLACK ONE.

YES, THAT'S
RIGHT, HOW DID
YOU FIND OUT?

OH, AMONG THE TRADE
WORD GETS PASSED ALONG.
I KNOW OF THIS
PARTICULAR VEHICLE,
I BELIEVE OWNER
DOES A LOT OF
HIS OWN WORK.
I UNDERSTAND.

THAT'S TOUGH TO
TANGLE WITH MR.
MERWIN. MIGHT YOU
BE THINKING OF.

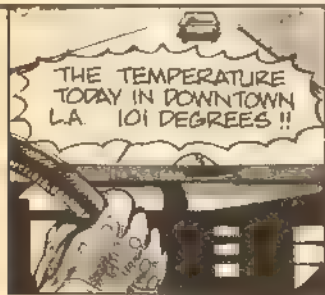
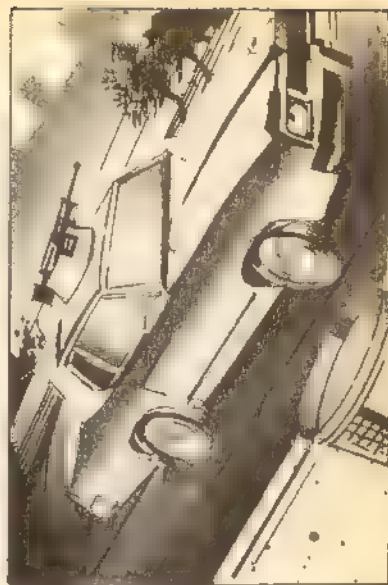
NEVER KNOW WHO YOU'LL
BUMP INTO ON THE ROAD
THESE DAYS, HECTOR
I'VE NEVER BEEN ONE TO
RUN FROM A DOG-FIGHT

I DID NOT MEAN TO
IMPLY THAT YOU WOULD.
WE ALL KNOW YOUR DRIVER-
COMBAT RECORD, MR. MERWIN.
THERE ARE NOT ALL THAT
MANY ACES LIVING
IN THE VALLEY.

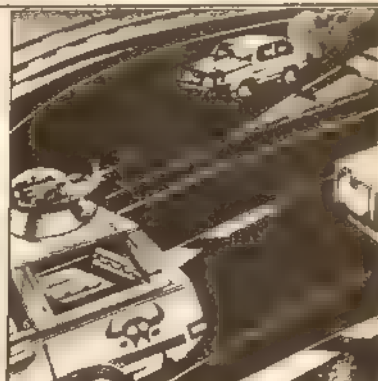
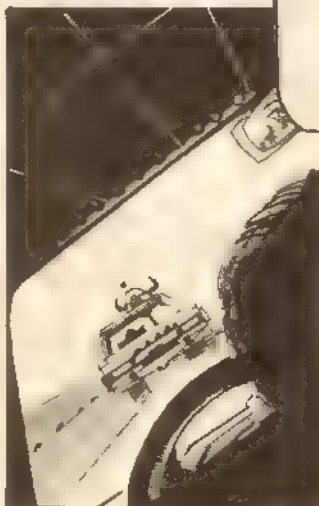
YES, WELL YOU WATCH YOURSELF,
MR. MERWIN. A MARAUDER IS BAD
NEWS STRAIGHT FROM THE FACTORY.
PROPERLY CUSTOMIZED, IT COULD
MOUNT ENOUGH STUFF TO TAKE
ON A GREYHOUND BUSNOUGHT.

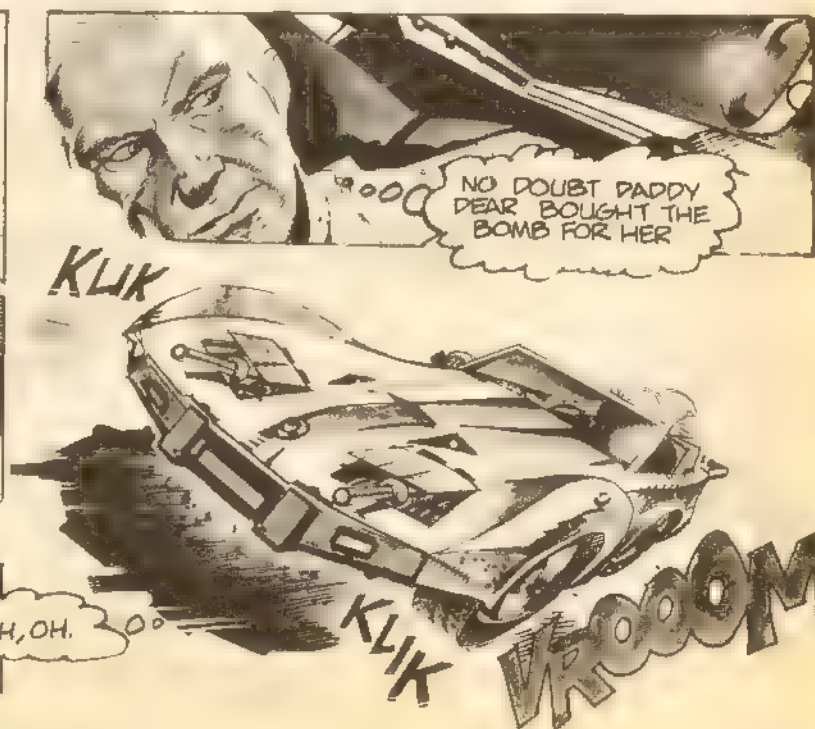
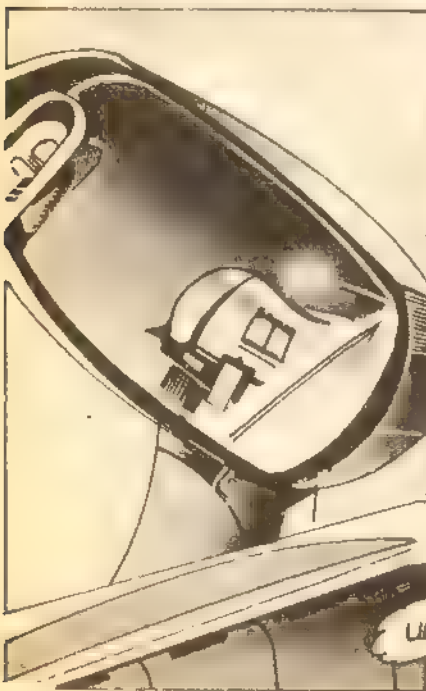
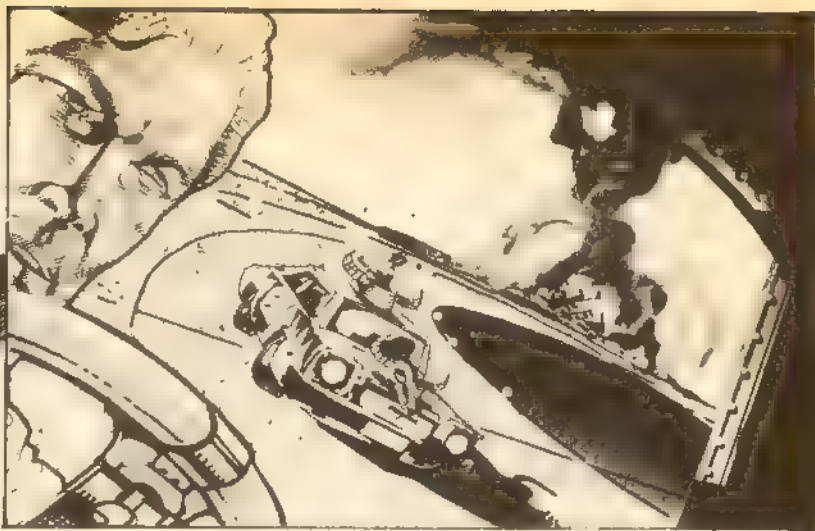
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME HECTOR.
I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF.
BESIDES, THE J.J. MOUNTS A
FEW SURPRISES OF HER OWN

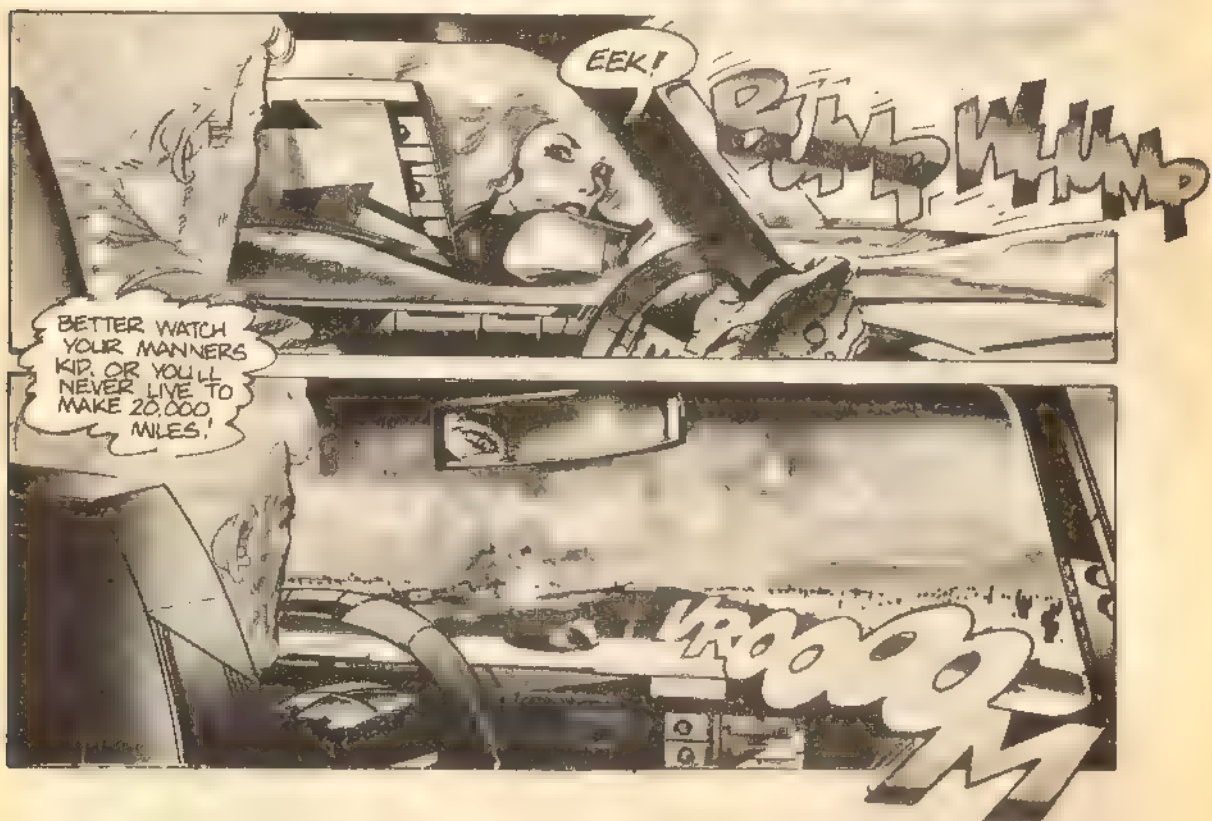
Mass Trans required and still requires a lot of money. One way in which the governments involved (meaning those of most industrial, developed nations) went about obtaining the necessary amounts was to cut back the expensive motorized forces needed to regulate the far flung freeway systems. As the cutbacks increased it gradually became accepted custom among the remaining overworked patrols to allow drivers to settle their own disputes. This custom was finalized by the Supreme Court's handing down of the famous *Brivervs. Matthews and the State of Texas* decision of '79, in which it was ruled that all attempts to regulate interstate, nonstop highway systems were in direct violation of the First Amendment.

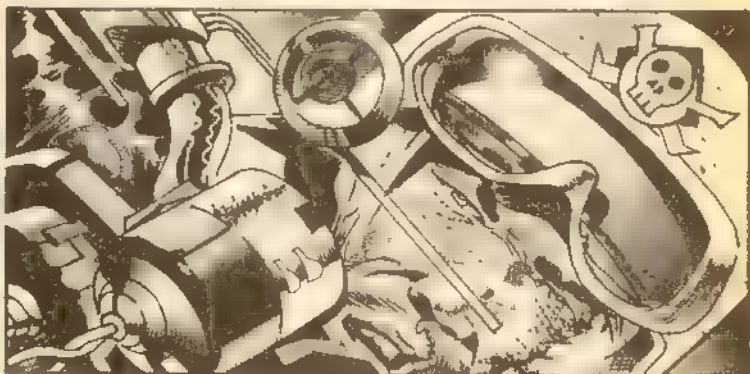
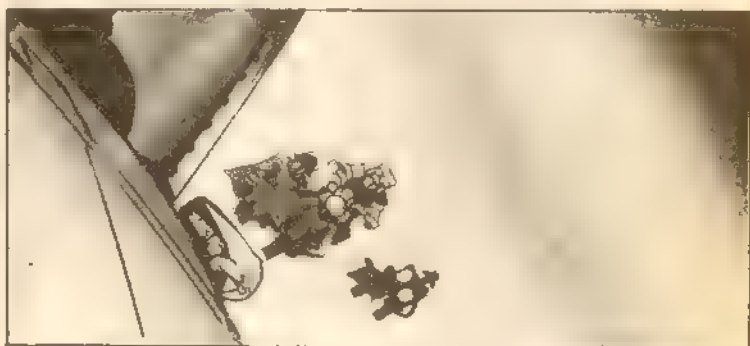


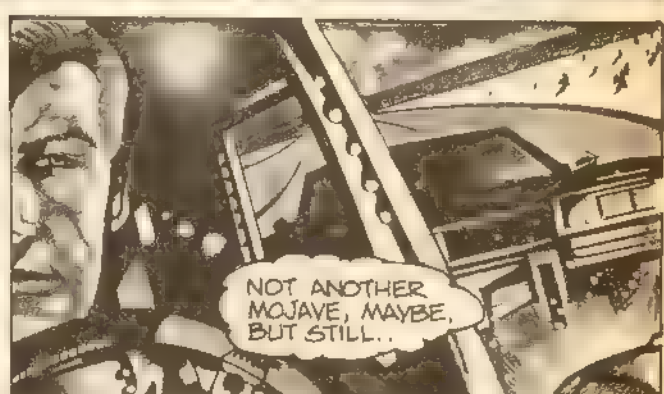
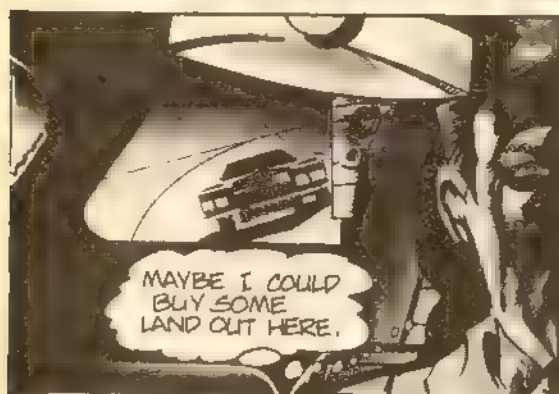
Any motorist who didn't feel up to potential arguments was provided a safe, quiet alternative means of transportation in the new Mass Trans systems, most of which ran down the center and sides of the familiar freeway routes, high above the frantic traffic. Benefits were immediate. Less pollution from even the fine turbine steam-electric engines of the private autos, an end to many downtown parking problems in the big cities—and more. For the first time since their inception the freeways, even at rush hour, became negotiable at speeds close to those envisioned by their builders. And psychiatrists began to advise driving as excellent therapy for persons afflicted with violent or even homicidal instincts.

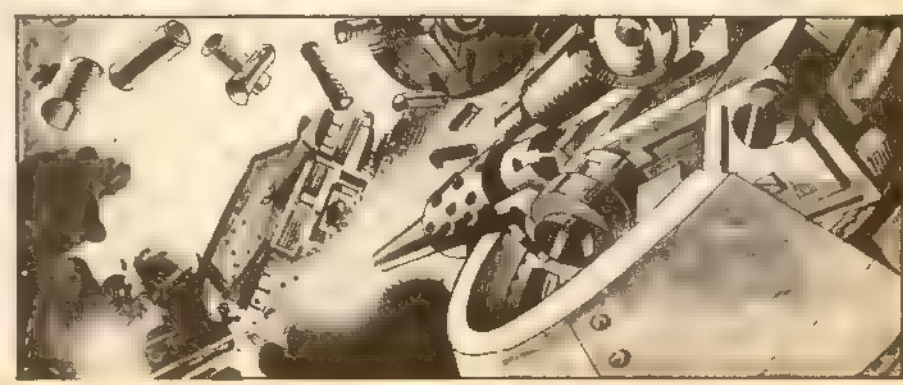
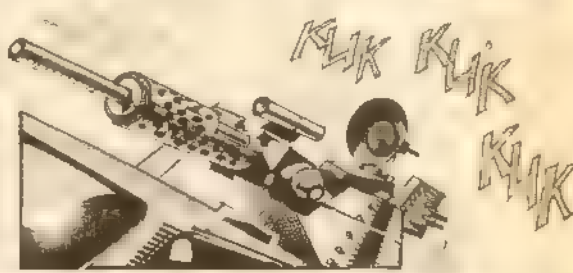
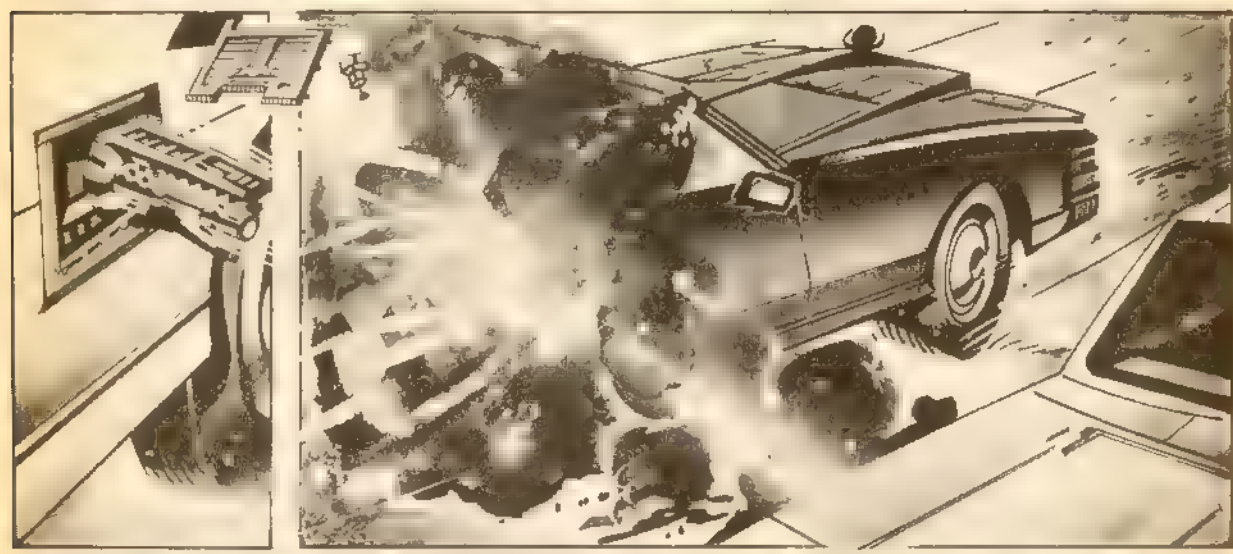




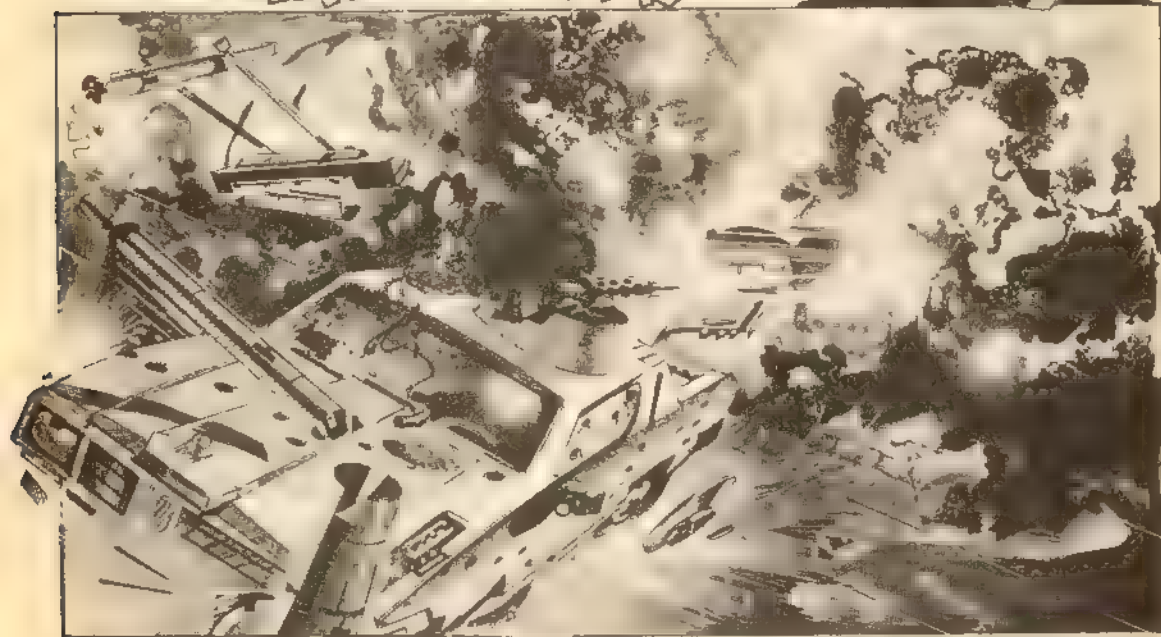
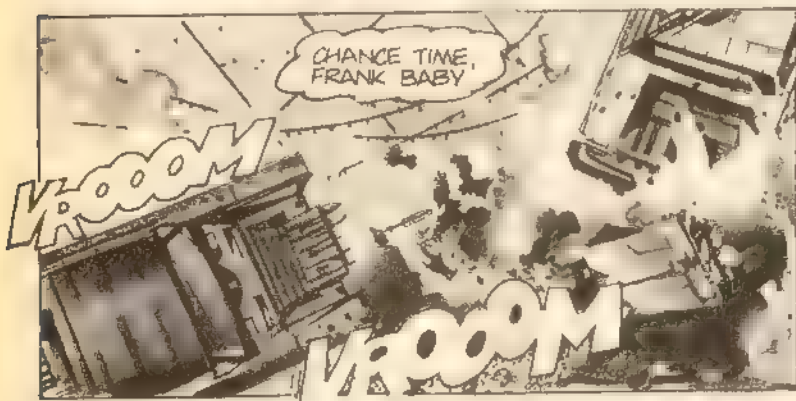


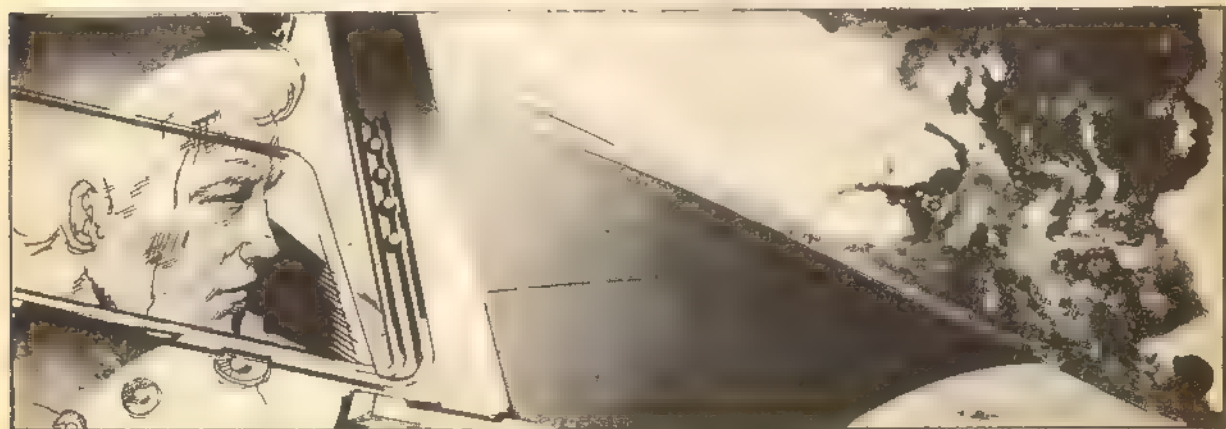


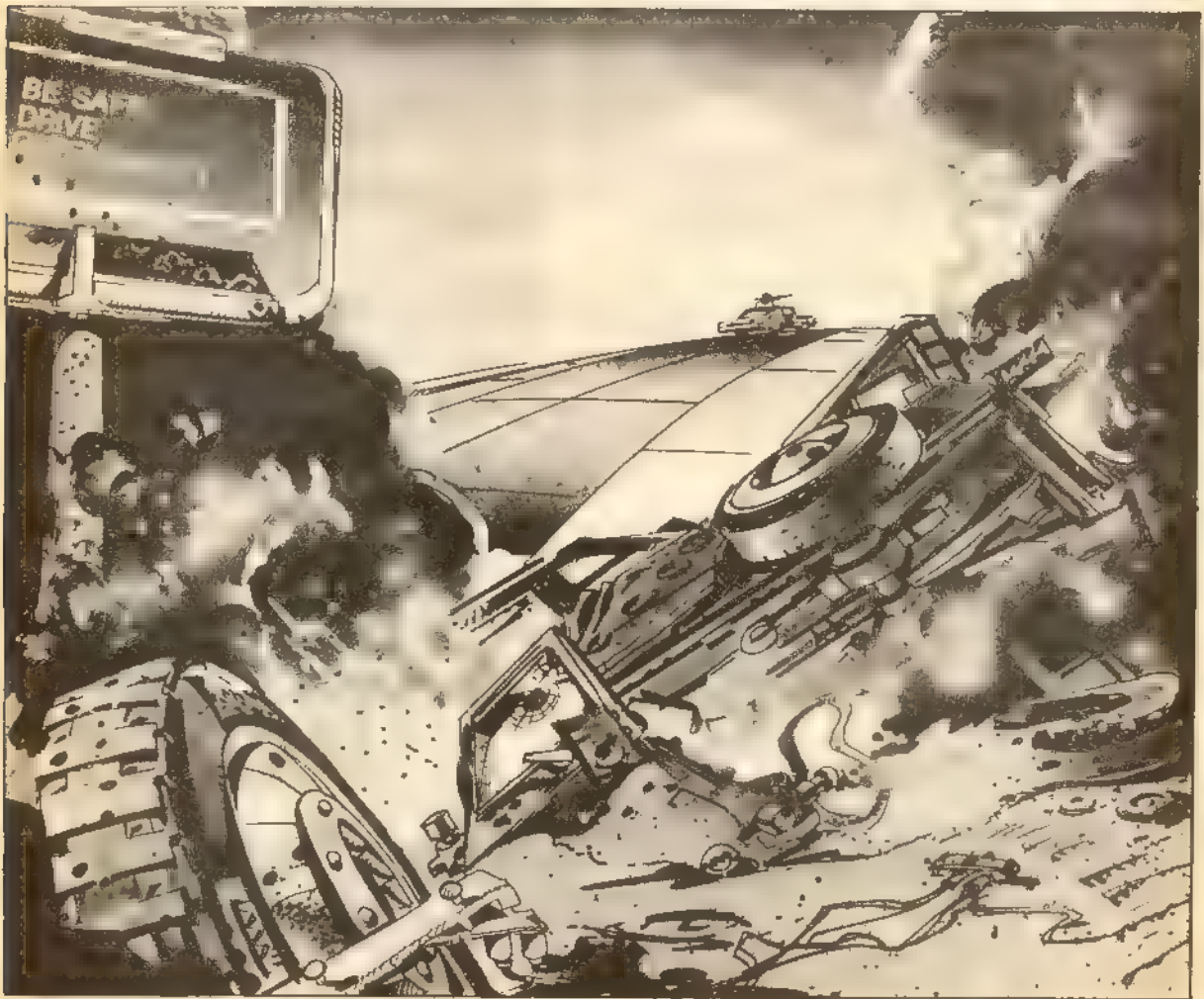
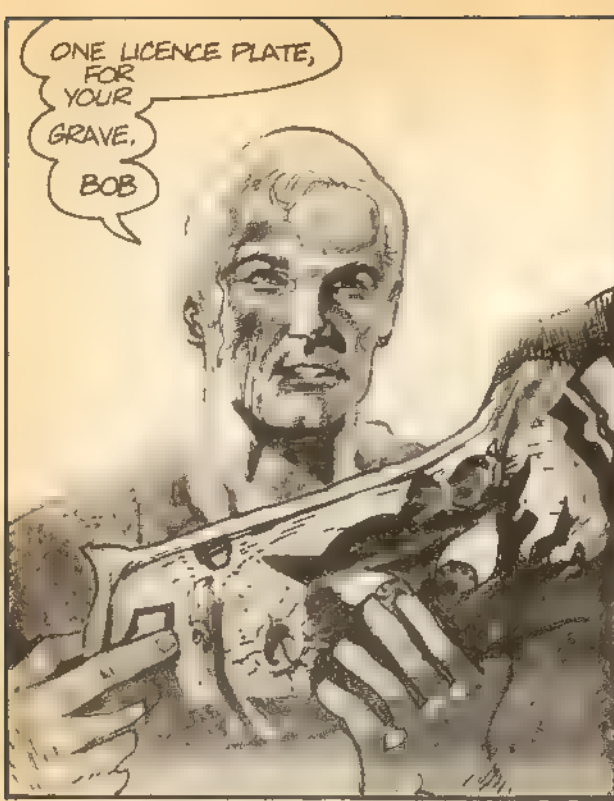












DEDICATION: SOUND EFFECTS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED TO ALEX TOTTH.

WHERE DO YOU GET THOSE IDEAS?

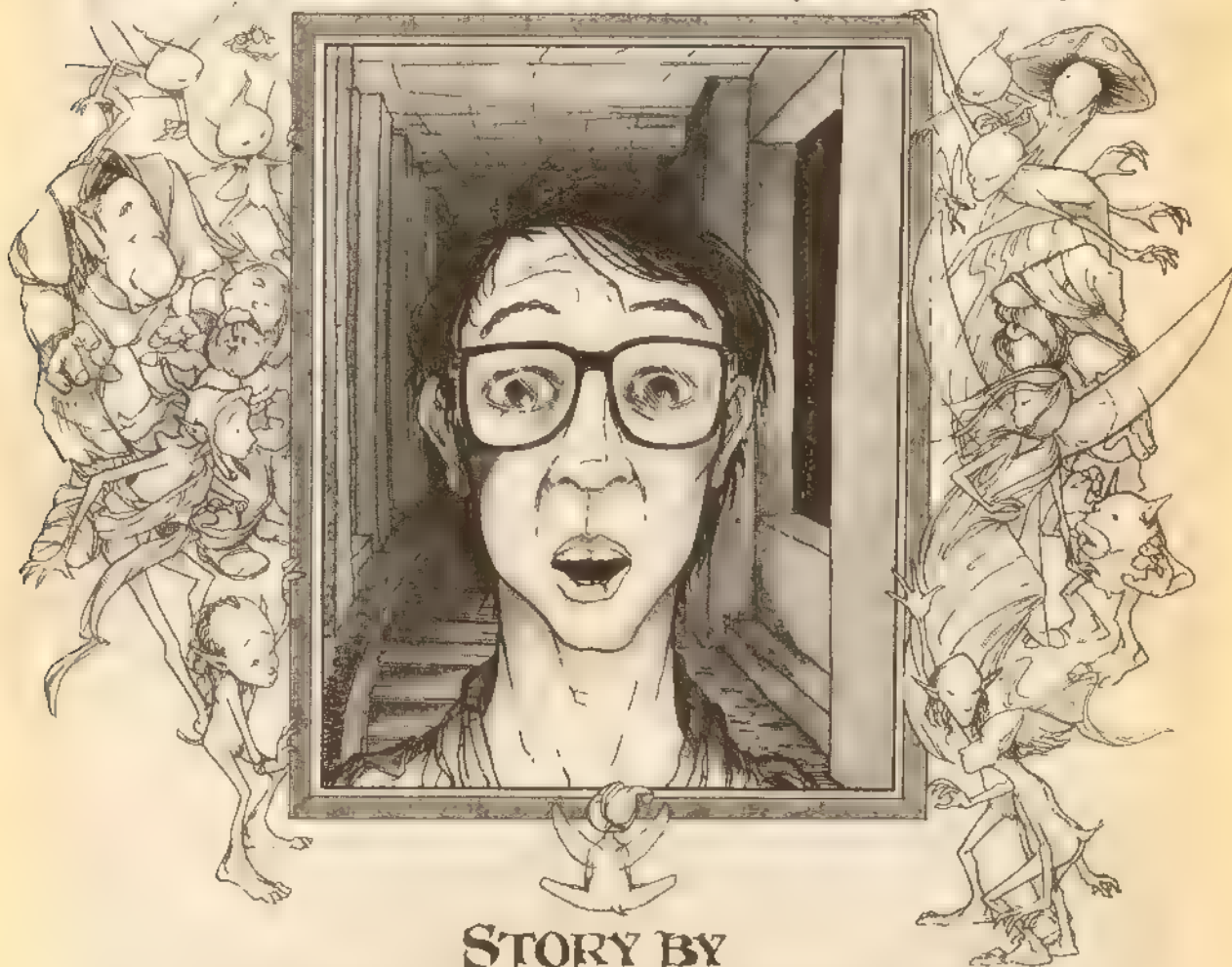
You ask me where do I get my ideas and I tell you I don't know
But
It doesn't matter because if I could explain it I wouldn't get
Them and therein lies a devastating paradox
Because
(Are you listening?)
You see in my outside self I am only a beetle making picayune
Skritch marks on the underside of a pebble
But
Inside I am a bottomless chasm of conceptualizing
And
I tell you that the thoughts oh the thoughts I have are a beach
Ten thousand miles long
But
All I ever will be able to write for you could be represented by
One grain of sand on that beach
And
That is what devastates me
Because
I want to share it all, all, all with you
I want you to swim in the ocean of my inside self
But
All I'll ever be able to put down on paper is to my thoughts no
More than an ant's pee is to a tsunami
(Can you understand?)
That though I'm doing my best for you I'm sick and sorry inside
Myself
Because
I know that if every man and woman and child on this earth had
An instrument to play that band would not be big enough to play
The song I want to sing to you
And
So you must excuse me if I stare blankly into space when you are
Talking to me or if I ignore you in the street when you greet me
Because
I am not being rude or indifferent
I am only trying to do it for you, my friends
So you see
If I would rather not talk about the weather with you it is
Because
I hear in my raging imagination story sounds that are the composite
To me of every thunder that ever rolled over this poor world
(Are you paying attention?)
And
Though there be no word on my lips there is
A shrieking in the blood
So please try to understand when I say that I've always known that
No man is an island
Because
All who write science-fiction are pocket universes and when you
Ask that question of us we cannot answer because we cannot analyze
A bipedal cosmos.
I have tried to make you see
(Do you see, you happy-poor deprived friends whom I love?)
That I cannot tell you where I get my ideas
Because
They sweep out of the vast void darkness that howls in me like the
Wind above the treeline and try to break through the smooth
Cool granite of my frail humanness and I am sorry, sorry but
There is only a very tiny crack in that wall
Please
Be patient.
Try to grasp what I'm telling you.
I've been as clear and polite as I can
But
To explain where I get my ideas from would be like trying to
Describe the texture of God's epidermis
So
I can only tell you they come
THEY COME, GODDAMMIT, THEY COME, AND THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT!
And
You will nod and say, "Yes, I do understand"
But
I know you don't and never will and never can
So all I can do is sigh and say I've tried my best to explain the
Impossible and might as well have tried to vivisection a quark
Just please don't interrupt me with the question too often
I have mountains to move.







THE METROGNOME



STORY BY
ALAN DEAN FOSTER

ILLUSTRATION BY
T. NESBITT



HARLIE DIMSDALE STARED AT THE MAN IN FRONT OF HIM. EVEN UNDER ORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES (**HARLIE DIMSDALE** WOULD HAVE

STARED AT THE MAN IN FRONT OF HIM. HOWEVER, **THIS** CONFRONTATION WAS TAKING PLACE IN THE LOWEST LEVELS OF THE 52ND STREET-BRONX SUBWAY LINE, A GOOD MANY METERS BENEATH THE HYSTERICAL SURFACE OF MANHATTAN. IT WAS JUST SHORT OF PREORDAINED THAT **CHARLIE DIMSDALE** WOULD STARE AT THE MAN IN FRONT OF HIM.

THE MAN IN FRONT OF **CHARLIE DIMSDALE** STOOD SLIGHTLY OVER A **METER HIGH**. HE WAS BROAD OUT OF ALL PROPORTION IN SELECTED PLACES. HIS **HEAD**, ESPECIALLY, WAS EVEN **LARGER** THAN THAT OF A NORMAL-SIZED MAN. ITS MOST NOTABLE FEATURE WAS A **PROBOSCI**S THAT WOULD BE FLATTERED BY THE APPELLATION **BULBOUS**. THIS REMARKABLE PROTUBERANCE WAS BORDERED BY A PAIR OF HUGE **JET-BLACK EYES** THAT HAD BENEATH BLACK EYEBROWS A KODIAK BEAR WOULD HAVE BEEN PROUD OF. TWO **ENORMOUS FLOPPY EARS**, THE SHAPE AND COLOUR OF DRIED APRICOTS, FLUTTERED SIDEWAYS FROM THE HEAD, THE SPAN A TRULY IMPRESSIVE SIGHT.

THE PATE ITSELF WAS AS BALD AND ROUND AS THE BOTTOM OF A **CHINA TEACUP**. A GOOD PORTION OF IT WAS COVERED BY A JAUNTY **RED BERET**, SET AT A RAKISH ANGLE TO THE LEFT. HUGE **BLACK MUTTONCHOP** WHISKERS RAMBLED LIKE A GIANT CATERPILLAR ACROSS HIS FACE.

ARMS THAT WERE TOO LONG FOR THE SHORT TORSO ENDED IN THICK, STUBBY FINGERS. BLACK HAIR, WELL CULTIVATED, GREW THERE IN PROFUSION. IN ADDITION TO THE BERET, HE WORE A **DOUBLE-BREASTED PINSTRIPE JACKET** WITH MATCHING TROUSERS. HIS **BLACK OXFORDS** WERE IMMACULATLY POLISHED.



HAD SUCH A CONFRONTATION OCCURRED ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD WITH AN APPROPRIATE **DIMSDALE-SUBSTITUTE**, IT IS LIKELY THAT SAID **DIMSDALE-SUBSTITUTE** WOULD HAVE FAINTED QUICKLY AWAY. **CHARLIE DIMSDALE**, HOWEVER, MERELY GULPED AND TOOK A STEP BACKWARDS.

AFTER ALL, THIS WAS **NEW YORK**.

THE LITTLE MAN PUT HIS HIRSUITE HANDS ON HIS HIPS AND STARED BACK AT **CHARLIE** WITH UNDISGUISED DISGUST.

"WELL, YOU'VE **SEEN ME**. NOW WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO **DO** ABOUT IT?"

"**SEEN YOU? DO?** LOOK MISTER, I'M ONLY...

MY NAME'S **CHARLES DIMSDALE**. I'M SECOND ASSISTANT INSPECTOR TO THE THE (UNDER-COMMISSIONER FOR SUBWAY MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR. THERE'S A MISALIGNED TRACK DOWN HERE. WE'VE HAD TO MAKE **THREE CONSECUTIVE COMPUTER REROUTINGS UP TOP** (THIS WAS OFFICIAL SLANG OF COURSE) FOR THREE DIFFERENT TRAINS. I'M TO SEE WHAT THE TROUBLE IS AND TO TRY AND CORRECT IT. IS ALL."

CHARLIE WAS A RATHER **PLEASANT** IF **UNSPECTACULAR** APPEARING YOUNG MAN. HE MIGHT EVEN BE CONSIDERED ATTRACTIVE IF IT WEREN'T FOR HIS MOUSEY ATTITUDE AND THOSE **GLASSES**. THEY WEREN'T QUITE THICK

ENOUGH TO DOUBLE AS REACTOR SHIELDING.

"(H... DID I JUST SEE YOU WALK OUT OF THAT WALL?"

"WHICH WALL?" THE MAN ASKED.

"THAT WALL, BEHIND YOU."

"OH, THAT WALL?"

"YES, THAT WALL, I DIDN'T THINK THERE WAS AN INSPECTION DOOR THERE, BUT...."

"THERE ISN'T. I DID."

"THAT'S **IMPOSSIBLE**," SAID **CHARLIE** REASONABLY. "PEOPLE DON'T GO AROUND WALKING THROUGH WALLS. IT ISN'T **DONE**. EVEN **MR. BROADHARE** CAN'T WALK THROUGH WALLS."



AS MANY BRAINS AS A **STALE PRETZEL**. THE BIG, SOFT KIND, WITH PLENTY OF SALT. SOMEONE WAS FULL OF DOUGH. CHARLIE HAD NO TROUBLE ISOLATING HIM.

"LOOK," HE SAID IMPLORINGLY, "YOU SIMPLY CAN'T **BE!**"

"THEN HOW THE DEUCE **AM I?**" THE GNOME STUCK OUT A HAIRY PAW. "LOOK, MY NAME'S **VAN GROOT.**"

"CHARMED," SAID CHARLIE, DAZEDLY SHAKING THE PROFFERED PALM.

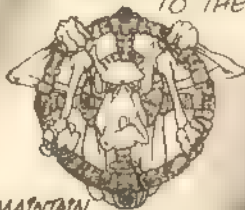
HERE I AM, HE THOUGHT, THIRTY METERS BELOW THE GROUND IN THE MIDDLE OF MANHATTAN SHAKING HANDS WITH A CHARACTER WHO CLAIMS TO BE OUT OF THE BROTHERS GRIMM NAMED VAN GROOT WHO WEARS BROOKS BROTHERS SUITS.

BUT HE **HAD** SEEN HIM WALK THROUGH THE WALL.

THIS SUGGESTED **TWO** POSSIBILITIES.

ONE, IT WAS REALLY HAPPENING AND THERE WERE INDEED SUCH CREATURES AS GNOMES.

TWO, HE'D BEEN BREATHING SUBWAY EXHAUST FUMES TOO LONG AND WAS ONLY OPERATING ON ONE CYLINDER. AT THE MOMENT HE INCLINED TO THE **LATTER** EXPLANATION.



"I DON'T DOUBT IT."

"THEN HOW CAN YOU STAND THERE AND MAINTAIN YOU WALKED THROUGH THAT WALL?"

"I'M NOT HUMAN. I'M A **GNOME**. A **METRO-GNOME**, TO BE SPECIFIC."

"OH, I GUESS THAT'S OKAY, THEN."

AT THAT POINT, NEW YORKER OR NO, CHARLIE FAINTED.

WHEN HE CAME TO, HE FOUND HIMSELF STARING INTO A PAIR OF SLIGHTLY GLOWING COAL-BLACK EYES. HE ALMOST FAINTED AGAIN, BUT SURPRISINGLY POWERFUL ARMS INSISTED HIM TO HIS FEET.

"NOW DON'T DO THAT TO ME AGAIN," SAID THE GNOME. "IT'S VERY RUDE AND DISCONCERTING. YOU MIGHT HAVE HIT YOUR HEAD ON THE RAIL AND HURT YOURSELF."

"WHAT RAIL?" ASKED CHARLIE GROGGILY.

"THAT ONE, THERE, IN THE MIDDLE."

"**ULP!**" CHARLIE TOOK SEVERAL STEPS BACK UNTIL HE WAS STANDING ON THE WALKWAY. "YOU'RE RIGHT. I REALLY COULD'VE HURT MYSELF, I WON'T DO IT AGAIN." HE LOOKED DISAPPROVINGLY AT THE GNOME. "YOU AREN'T HELPING THINGS ANY, YOU KNOW. WHY DON'T YOU **VANISH?** THERE'RE NO SUCH THINGS AS **GNOMES**. EVEN IN **NEW YORK**. **ESPECIALLY** IN **NEW YORK.**"

"**HA!**" GRUNTED THE GNOME. HE SAID IT IN SUCH A WAY AS TO IMPLY THAT AMONG THOSE ASSEMBLED, THERE WAS ONE POSSESSED OF ABOUT





"I KNOW HOW YOU MUST FEEL," SAID VAN GROOT SYMPATHETICALLY. "COME ALONG WITH ME FOR A BIT. THE EXERCISE WILL CLEAR YOUR HEAD. EVEN IF, **DE PUYSTER** KNOWS, THERE'S PROBABLY NOT MUCH IN IT ANYWAY."

"SURE. WHY NOT? OH, WAIT A MINUTE. I'VE GOT TO FIND AND CLEAR THAT BLOCKED SWITCH."

"WHICH SWITCH OVER IS IT?" THE GNOME INQUIRED.

"463. IT'S BEEN JUMPED TO INDICATE A BLOCKED TRACK AND THUS THE COMPUTER AUTOMATICALLY SENDS...."

"I KNOW."

"....SEVERAL ALTERNATE PROGRAMS... YOU KNOW?"

"SURE. I'M THE ONE WHO SET IT."

"YOU RESET IT? YOU CAN'T DO THAT!"

VAN GROOT SAID "HA!" AGAIN AND CHARLIE DECIDED THAT IF NOTHING ELSE HE WAS NOT OVERWHELMING THIS CREATURE WITH HIS PRECISION OF THOUGHT.

"OKAY. WHY DID YOU MOVE IT?"

"IT WAS INTERFERING WITH THE SMOOTH RUNNING OF OUR MINE CARTS."

"MINE CARTS! THERE AREN'T ANY MINE...." HE HESITATED. "I SEE. IT WAS INTERFERING WITH YOUR MINE CARTS." VAN GROOT NODDED APPROVINGLY. CHARLIE HAD TO HOP AND SKIP OCCASIONALLY TO KEEP UP WITH THE GNOME'S SHORT BUT BRISK STRIDE.

"UH, WHY COULDN'T YOUR MINE CARTS JUST GO OVER THE SWITCH WHEN IT WAS CORRECTLY SET?"

"BECAUSE," THE GNOME EXPLAINED, AS ONE WOULD TO A CHILD, "THAT WAY, THE METAL KEPT WHISPERING 'BLOCKED, BLOCKED.' THIS UPSET THE MINERS. THEY WORK VERY CLOSELY WITH METAL AND THEY'RE SENSITIVE TO IT. WITH THE

SWITCH THROWN THIS WAY, THE RAILS MURMUR 'OPEN, OPEN' AND THE BOYS FEEL BETTER."

"BUT THAT SEEMS LIKE SUCH A SMALL THING."

"IT IS," SAID VAN GROOT.

"THAT'S NOT VERY POLITE."

"NOW, WHY SHOULD WE BE **POLITE**? DO YOU EVER HEAR ANYONE SAY, 'LET'S TAKE UP A COLLECTION FOR **NEEDY GNOMES**?' IS THERE A **SAVE THE GNOMES LEAGUE**? OR A SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO GNOMES? WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU HEARD OF SOMEONE DOING SOMETHING FOR A GNOME, ANY GNOME!" VAN GROOT WAS GETTING EXCITED. HIS EARS FLAPPED AND HIS WHISKERS BRISTLED. "**CANARIES** AND **FRUIT-FLY** RESEARCHERS CAN GET GOVERNMENT MONEY, BUT **US**? ALL WE ASK ARE OUR UNALLENABLE RIGHTS, TO **LIFE, LIBERTY, PLenty OF FIGHTS AND BOOZE!**"

THIS ISN'T GETTING ME ANYWHERE, THOUGHT CHARLIE COGENTLY.

"I ADMIT IT SEEMS INEQUITABLE," VAN GROOT SEEMED TO CALM DOWN A LITTLE. "BUT I'D STILL APPRECIATE IT IF YOU'D LET ME SHIFT THE TRACK BACK THE WAY IT BELONGS."

"I TOLD YOU, IT WOULD BE INCONVENIENT. YOU HUMANS NEVER LEARN. STILL, YOU SEEM LIKE SUCH A NICE, PLEASANT SORT... FOR A **HUMAN**. PROPERLY DEFERENTIAL, TOO. I MAY CONSIDER IT. JUST **CONSIDER** IT, MIND."

"THAT'S VERY DECENT OF YOU. UH, (HOW DOES ONE MAKE SMALL TALK WITH A GNOME?) ... NICE WEATHER WE'RE HAVING, ISN'T IT?" SOMEONE HAD THROWN A BEER CAN OUT OF A SUBWAY WINDOW. CHARLIE STEPPED DOWN OFF THE WALKWAY TO REMOVE THE CAN FROM THE TRACKS.

"NOT PARTICULARLY."

THOUGHT ALL YOU PEOPLE LIVED IN IRELAND AND PLACES LIKE THAT."

"IRELAND, MY MYOPIC FRIEND, IS COLD, WET, RAINY, UNCIVILIZED, AND FULL OF CRAZY AMERICAN **EMIGRÉS**. ABOUT THE ONLY THING YOU CAN MINE THERE IN QUANTITY IS **PEAT**. SPEAKING AS A MINER, LET ME TELL YOU THAT IT'S PRETTY HARD TO TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR PROFESSION WHEN ALL YOU MINE IS PEAT. DID YOU EVER SEE A NECKLACE MADE OF PEAT? A QUEEN'S TIARA? AND IT TAKES A LOUSY FACET. **IRELAND!** THAT'S OUR TRADE YOU KNOW. WE'RE MOSTLY MINERS AND SMITHS."

"WHY?"

"THAT'S ABOUT THE **STUPIDEST** QUESTION I'VE EVER HEARD."

"SORRY."

"DO YOU THINK WE'D IGNORE A **WHOLE NEW WORLD** AND LEAVE IT TO YOU **HUMANS**? WHEN YOUR NOISY, SLOPPY, RIGHTEOUS ANCESTORS PADDLED ACROSS, **WE** CAME TOO. UNOBTRUSIVELY, OF COURSE. WHY THERE WERE GNOMES WITH **WASHINGTON** AT **VALLEY FORGE** WITH **JONES** ON THE...!"

"WELL, I CAN CERTAINLY UNDERSTAND THAT," SAID CHARLIE HASTILY, "BUT I THOUGHT YOU PREFERRED THE COUNTRY LIFE."

"BY AND LARGE, MOST OF US DO. BUT YOU KNOW HOW IT IS. THE WORLD'S BECOMING AN URBAN SOCIETY. WE HAVE TO CHANGE TOO. I'VE GOT RELATIVES UPSTATE YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE. THEY STILL THINK THEY CAN LIVE LIKE IT'S **WASHINGTON IRVING'S DAY. REACTIONARIES.**"

CHARLIE TRIED TO CONCEIVE OF A REACTIONARY GNOME, FAILED.

"AND GOOD GEM MINES ARE GETTING HARDER AND HARDER TO FIND OUT IN THE COUNTRY. ALL THE SURFACE ONES ARE BEING TURNED INTO **TOURIST TRAPS**. IT'S HARD ENOUGH TO FIND A DECENT PLACE TO **SLEEP** ANYMORE, WHAT WITH ONE PETROLEUM ENGINEER AFTER ANOTHER DOING **SEISMIC DOWNING**. ANY **IDIOT** COULD TELL YOU THERE'S NO OIL AT NINETY PER CENT OF THE

PLACES THEY TRY. BUT WILL THEY LEARN? **NO!** SO IT'S **BOOM, BOOM, BOOM**, NIGHT AFTER NIGHT. THE SUBWAYS ARE MILD AND CONSISTENT BY CONTRAST."

"WHOA. YOU MEAN YOU DO MINING... RIGHT HERE IN **MANHATTAN**?"

"UNDER **MANHATTAN**. OH WE'VE FOUND SOME **EXCELLENT SPOTS!** GO DOWN A LITTLE WAY AND THE GEM-BEARING ROCK IS PLENTIFUL. CHECK YOUR NEW YORK HISTORY. EXCAVATORS TURN UP FAIR QUALITY STONES. BUT NO ONE BOTHERS TO DIG FURTHER BECAUSE THEIR **GLASS TOMB** OR **PYRAMID** OR WHATEVER IS ON A DEADLINE. TOURMALINE, BERYL, THE QUARTZ GEMS...

THEY'VE TURNED UP IN THE FOUNDATIONS OF SOME PRETTY FAMOUS BUILDINGS. THE **RARER, MORE VALUABLE** STUFF IS BURIED **FURTHER DOWN**. EVEN SO, THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING ALMOST DID BECOME A MINE. BUT WE GOT TO THE DRILLER WHO FOUND THE **DIAMONDS.**"

CHARLIE SWALLOWED.

"AND THERE'S PLENTY OF **SCRAP METAL**. WE TURN IT INTO **SCEPTERS** AND THINGS. MOSTLY TO KEEP IN PRACTICE, THERE ISN'T MUCH OF A MARKET FOR **CAST-IRON SCEPTERS.**"

"I CAN IMAGINE," SAID CHARLIE SYMPATHETICALLY.

"STILL, YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN YOU'LL NEED A GOOD **SCEPTER**. OR A PROPER **FLAGAN-PHLANGE.**"

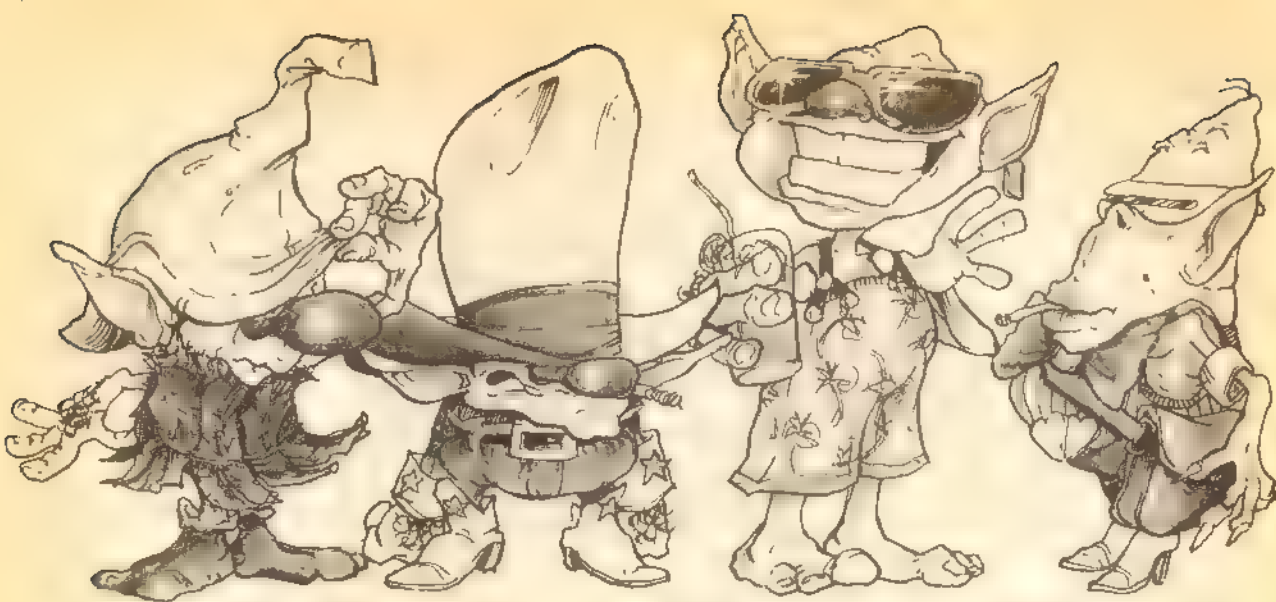
"PARDON MY IGNORANCE..."

"I'VE BEEN DOING THAT FOR HALF AN HOUR."

"...BUT WHAT IS A **FLAGAN-PHLANGE**?"

"OH, THEY'RE USED TO ATTRACT... BUT NEVER MIND, ABOUT THAT **SCRAP METAL** AND SUCH. WE'RE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT OUR ENVIRONMENT. GNOMES ARE GOOD FOR THE **ECOLOGY.**"





"UH." CHARLIE WAS RUNNING A POSSIBLE SCENARIO THROUGH HIS MIND. HE SAW HIMSELF REPORTING TO **UNDER COMMISSIONER BROADHARE**. "I'VE FIXED THE JAMMED SWITCH STR. THE GNOMES MOVED IT BECAUSE IT WAS INTERFERING WITH THEIR MINE CARTS. BUT I DON'T WANT YOU TO PROSECUTE THEM BECAUSE THEY'RE GOOD FOR THE ECOLOGY."

"RIGHT, DIMSDALE. JUST STAND THERE. EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT."

OH YEAH.

"BUT I WOULD HAVE IMAGINED...." HE WAVED AN UNCERTAIN HAND AT VAN GROOT, "WELL, JUST LOOK AT YOURSELF!"

THE GNOME DID, "WHAT DID YOU EXPECT? GREEN LEAVES, LEDERHOSEN AND A FEATHER CAP? YOU KNOW, MANHATTAN IS ONE OF THE FEW PLACES IN THE WORLD WHERE WE CAN OCCASIONALLY SLIP OUT AND MIX WITH HUMANS, WITHOUT STARTING A RIOT. ALWAYS AT NIGHT, OF COURSE, ARE YOU SURE YOU HAVEN'T SEEN ANY OF US? WE'RE VERY COMMON AROUND TIMES SQUARE AND THE THEATRE DISTRICT."

CHARLIE THOUGHT, BELOW THE FLATIRON BUILDING AT ONE A.M.? ON A BENCH IN WASHINGTON SQUARE? A GLIMPSE HERE, A REFLECTION IN A WINDOW THERE? WHO WOULD NOTICE?

AFTER ALL, THIS WAS NEW YORK.

"I SEE. DO ALL YOU CITY GNOMES....?"

"METROGNOMES," CORRECTED VAN GROOT PLACIDLY.

"DO ALL YOU METROGNOMES DRESS LIKE THAT?"

"SHARP, ISN'T IT? COST ME A PRETTY PENNY TOO. DOUBLE KNIT, SPECIAL CUT, OF COURSE. I CAN'T EXACTLY WEAR SOMETHING RIGHT OFF THE RACK. NO, IT DEPENDS ON YOUR JOB. I'M SORT OF AN ADMINISTRATOR. AN EXECUTIVE IF YOU WILL. DRESS ALSO DEPENDS ON WHERE YOU LIVE. THE GNOMES THAT WORK UNDER DALLAS PREFER STETSONS AND COWBOY BOOTS. THOSE

THAT LIVE UNDER MIAMI ARE PARTIAL TO SUN SHORTS AND BIG DARK SUNGLASSES. AND YOU SHOULD SEE THE GNOMES THAT LIVE UNDER A PLACE CALLED THE **SUNSET STRIP** IN LOS ANGELES!" HE SHOOK HIS BOSCHIAN BALDNESS. "WE'RE HERE."

THEY'D HALTED IN FRONT OF A SWITCHING SECTION OF TRACK. CHARLIE COULD SEE THE RED WARNING LIGHT STARING STEADILY UP-TUNNEL, A BALEFUL BLOODY EYE.

THE SILENCE WAS PUNCTUATED ABRUPTLY BY A LOW-PITCHED RUMBLING, LIKE THUNDER. IT GREW STEADILY TO A GROUND-SHAKING ROAR.





CLUMSY, HUGE, OLD FASH-
IONED MINE CART, BUILT TO
HALF SCALE, CAME EXPLOD-
ING OUT OF THE FAR WALL.
TWO GNOMES WERE PUSH-
ING IT FROM BEHIND WHILE
ANOTHER PULLED AND GUID-

ED THE FRONT. THE LEAD GNOME HAD **PURE**
WHITE HAIR AND A **THREE-FOOT BEARD** THAT
TRAILED BEHIND HIM LIKE A PENNANT.

THE CART CAREENED CRAZILY DOWN AND
OVER THE TRACKS, THREATENING TO OVERTURN
EVERYTIME IT HIT THE GROUND. SOMEHOW IT
SEEMED TO FLOW OVER THE RAILS. THE THREE
GNOMES WORE **DIRTY COVERALLS** AND **MINERS'**
HARD HATS WITH **CARBIDE LAMPS**. THE CART
WAS PILED HIGH WITH GLEAMING, UNCUT GEM-
STONES AND WHAT LOOKED LIKE AN **ARCHAIC**
WASHER-DRYER. THE LEAD GNOME HAD JUST
ENOUGH TIME FOR A FAST WAVE TO THEM BE-
FORE THE APPARITION DISAPPEARED INTO THE
NEAR WALL. THE RUMBLE DIED AWAY SLOWLY.
IT REMINDED CHARLIE OF THE SOUND HIS
GARBAGE DISPOSAL MADE WHEN IT WANTED TO
BE PETULANT.

"WELL, WHAT ARE YOU **WAITING** FOR?
SWITCH IT BACK."

"**WHAT?**" SAID CHARLIE DAZEDLY. "YOU MEAN,
I CAN?"

"YES. NOW HURRY UP, BEFORE I CHANGE
MY MIND."

CHARLIE STUMBLER OVER AND PULLED THE
MANUAL SWITCH. THE HEAVY SECTION OF TRACK
SLID PONDEROUSLY IN TO PLACE AND THE WARNING
LIGHT CHANGED TO A **BENEFACTANT LEAFY**
GREEN. IT WOULD SHOW GREEN NOW ON THE
MASTER LAYOUT IN THE CONTROLLER'S OFFICE.

"**NOW!**" SAID VAN GROOT WITH ENOUGH
FORCE TO STARTLE CHARLIE. "YOU OWE **ME** A
FAVOR!"

"YEAH. SURE. UH... WHAT DID YOU HAVE
IN MIND?" SAID CHARLIE APPREHENSIVELY, CALL-

ING UP IMAGES OF BLOOD-SUCKING AND DEVIL
SACRIFICE.

"I DON'T MIND TELLING YOU THAT THINGS
HAVE BEEN GETTING RATHER **EDGY** DOWN HERE.
WHAT WITH ONE SKYSCRAPER AFTER ANOTHER
GOING UP. AND **NOW** YOU'RE EXPANDING THE
SUBWAY AGAIN. I CAN'T PROMISE **WHAT** MIGHT
HAPPEN. ONE OF THESE DAYS, SOMEONE'S GO-
ING TO DRIVE A SHAFT RIGHT DOWN INTO ONE
OF OUR DIGGINGS AND WE'LL HAVE **ANOTHER**
STRIKE ON OUR HANDS."

"HAPPEN? STRIKE?"

"BOY, YOU SURE ARE **ELOQUENT** WHEN
YOU GET HUMMING. SURE. GNOMES AREN'T
KNOWN FOR THEIR EVEN TEMPER, YOU KNOW.
WHEN GNOMES GO ON STRIKE, THEY'VE GOT NOTH-

ING TO DO BUT **CAUSE MISCHIEF**. THE LAST
ONE WE HAD WAS **BACK IN...**" HE MURMUR-
ED A DATE THAT MOMENTARILY HAD NO MEAN-
ING TO CHARLIE.

THEN, "**HEY**, WASN'T THAT THE WEEK
OF THE **BIG BLACKOUT**, ACROSS THE NORTH-
EAST?"

"WELL, YOU KNOW HOW STRIKES SPREAD,
THE BOYS UNDER **PITTSBURGH** AND **BOSTON**
GOT TOGETHER WITH SOME POWER PLANT
GNOMES AND.... IT WAS A **TERRIBLE**
MESS! MOST AWKWARD!"

"**AWKWARD!** GOOD GRIEF, ANOTHER
FEW DAYS OF THAT AND...."

VAN GROOT NODDED SOBERLY, "**EXACT-**
LY. SOME OF US FINALLY APPEALED TO THE
BOYS' REASON, MORAL FIBRE, AND GOOD
NATURE. WHEN THAT DIDN'T WORK, WE
GOT MOST OF 'EM DEAD DRUNK AND THE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPAIRED A LOT OF
THE DAMAGE."

"NO WONDER THE ENGINEERS
COULD NEVER FIGURE OUT WHAT CAUSED IT."

"OH, THEY MADE UP **EXCUSES**. DIDN'T
STOP THEM FROM TAKING CREDIT FOR FIXING
THE TROUBLE," SAID VAN GROOT. "BUT THEN,
WHO EXPECTS GRATITUDE FROM **HUMANS?**"



"YOU EXPECT SOMETHING LIKE THAT MIGHT HAPPEN AGAIN? THAT WOULD BE **AWFUL!**"

THE GNOME SHRUGGED. "THAT DEPENDS ON YOUR POINT OF VIEW."

HE FLICKED AWAY HIS CIGAR ASH DAINITLY, "AS A MATTER OF FACT, IT SO HAPPENS THAT THIS NEW ADDITION TO YOUR SYSTEM...."

"IT'S NOT **MY** SYSTEM!"

"YES. ANYHOW, WE'VE GOT A PRETTY NICE **CRYSO-BERYL AND EMERALD MINE...**"

"**EMERALD MINE!**"

".... RIGHT UNDER THE INTERSECTION OF **6TH AVENUE AND 16TH STREET**, THAT MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU?"

"WHY NO, I... NO, WAIT A MINUTE. THAT'S WHERE...." HE GOGGLED AT VAN GROOT.

"YEP, THE NEW **BRONX-MANHATTAN TUNNEL** IS GOING THROUGH JUST SOUTH OF THERE. **THAT'S** NOT THE PROBLEM, IT'S THE NEW EXPRESS STATION THAT'S SET TO GO IN...."

"... RIGHT OVER YOUR MINE," WHISPERED CHARLIE.

"THE BOYS ARE **PRETTY UPSET** ABOUT IT. THEY READ THE **TIMES**. IT'S A PRETTY EXPLOSIVE SITUATION, **DIMSDALE. EXPLOSIVE.**" HE LOOKED HARD AT CHARLIE.

"BUT WHAT DO YOU EXPECT **ME** TO DO? I'M ONLY SECOND ASSISTANT INSPECTOR TO THE UNDERCOMMISSIONER FOR SUBWAY MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR. I HAVEN'T GOT THE **POWER** TO ORDER CHANGES IN THINGS LIKE STATION LOCATIONS AND ROUTINGS AND STUFF!"

"THAT'S NOT **MY** PROBLEM," SAID VAN GROOT.

"BUT THEY'RE SCHEDULED TO START BLASTING FOR THAT STATION... MY GOD, **THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW!**"

"THAT'S WHAT I HEAR," VAN GROOT SIGHED, "TOO BAD, I DON'T KNOW WHAT'LL HAPPEN THIS TIME, THERE'S BEEN TALK OF GETTING TO-

GETHER WITH THE **VERMONT AND NEW HAMPSHIRE** GNOMES. THEY WANT TO POUR MAPLE SYRUP INTO THE TELEPHONE CABLES AND SWITCHES BETWEEN **GREAT NECK AND OTTAWA**. A STICKY SITUATION, I CAN TELL YOU!"

"BUT YOU CAN'T....!" VAN GROOT LOOKED AT CHARLIE AS THOUGH HE WERE EXAMINING A SPECIAL SPECIES OF EARTH WORM.

"YES YOU CAN."

"THAT'S BETTER," SAID VAN GROOT. "I'LL DO WHAT I CAN. BUT WHILE I DISAGREE WITH THE BOYS' METHODS, I SYMPATHIZE WITH THEIR SENTIMENTS. THEY TOOK AN EMERALD OUT OF THERE ONCE THAT WAS...." HE PAUSED. "BEST I CAN GIVE YOU IS ABOUT TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, NO LATER THAN TWELVE O'CLOCK TOMORROW NIGHT."

"WHY TWELVE?," ASKED CHARLIE INANELY.

"IT'S TRADITIONAL. IF YOU'VE MANAGED TO HELP ANY, I'LL MEET YOU BACK HERE. IF NOT, GO SOAK YOUR HEAD."

"LOOK, I TOLD YOU, I'M ONLY A SECOND ASSISTANT TO...."

"I REMEMBER. I'M NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR FAILINGS. **YOUR PROBLEM.**"

"TOMORROW'S SATURDAY. ON SUNDAYS I ALWAYS CALL MY MOTHER IN GREENVILLE. IF YOU GUM UP THE TELEPHONE LINES I WON'T BE ABLE TO."

"AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF GENERAL COMPUTERS, WHO USUALLY CALLS HIS MISTRESS IN GENEVA ON SUNDAY MORNINGS, WON'T BE ABLE TO, EITHER," SAID VAN GROOT. "IT'LL BE A VERY DEMOCRATIC CRISIS. REMEMBER, **MIDNIGHT TOMORROW.**"

PUFFING MIGHTILY ON THE CIGAR AND IGNORING CHARLIE'S ENTREATIES, THE GNOME EXECUTIVE DISAPPEARED INTO THE NEAR WALL OF THE TUNNEL.

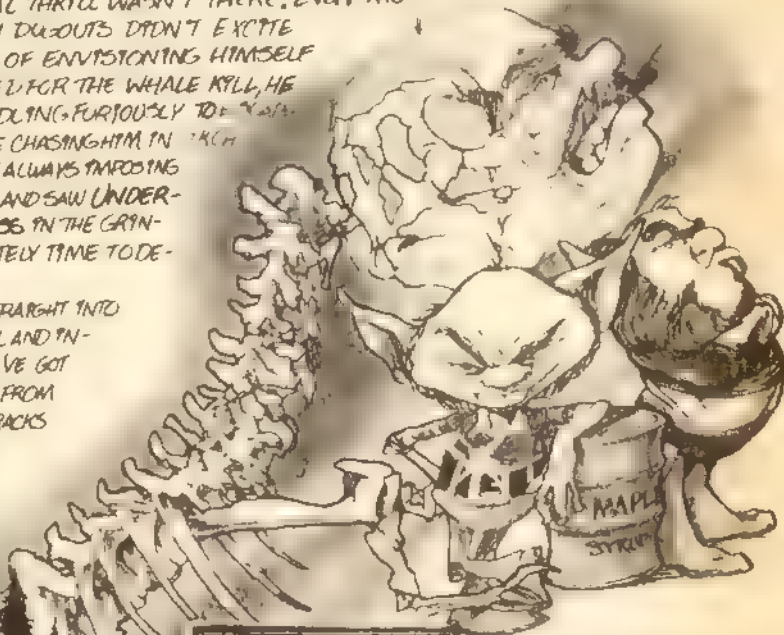


HE MORNING WAS COOL AND CLEAR. ON SATURDAY MORNINGS, CHARLIE USUALLY WENT FIRST TO THE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, THEN OFF TO THE GUGGENHEIM TO SEE IF ANYTHING NEW HAD COME IN DURING THE WEEK. FROM THERE IT WAS DOWN TO THE VILLAGE FOR A QUICK TOUR THROUGH HELMACKER'S ACRES OF BOOKS BOOK-STORE. THEN HOME, WHERE HE WOULD TREAT HIMSELF TO A EXPENSIVE TV DINNER INSTEAD OF THE USUAL FRIED CHICKEN OR SWISS STEAK. OUT TO A FILM OR CONCERT AND THEN HOME.

TODAY, HOWEVER, HIS SCHEDULE WAS MARKEDLY ALTERED. HE WENT TO THE MUSEUM ON TIME. THE USUAL THRILL WASN'T THERE. EVEN THE EXHIBITS OF NORTHWESTERN INDIAN DUGOUTS DIDN'T EXCITE HIM AS THEY USUALLY DID. INSTEAD OF ENVYING HIMSELF FERTHET IN THE BOW, HARPOON FISHED FOR THE WHALE KILL, HE SAW HIMSELF CROUCHED IN THE REAR, PADDLING FURIOUSLY TO THE REAR. THE HORDES OF ANGRY GNOMES THAT WERE CHASING HIM IN THE BARK CANOES. AND WHEN HE LOOKED AT THE ALWAYS IMPRESSIVE SKELETON OF THE TYRANNO SAURUS REX AND SAW UNDER-COMMISSIONER BROADHARE'S SOUR PUGS IN THE GRINNING SKULL, HE DECIDED IT WAS DEFINITELY TIME TO DEPART.

HE MADE UP A SPEECH. HE'D WALK STRAIGHT INTO COMMISSIONER FEELY'S OFFICE, POWERFUL AND INSISTENT, AND SAY, "LOOK HERE FEELY, YOU'VE GOT TO SHIFT THE NEW SIXTH AVENUE STATION FROM THE NORTH TO THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE TRACKS BECAUSE IF YOU DON'T THE GNOMES WILL DESTROY OUR GREAT TELEPHONE NETWORK WITH MAPLE SYRUP AND....!"

CHARLIE MOANED.



HE WAS STILL MOANING WHEN HE STUMBLED OUT OF THE MUSEUM. THE STONE LIONS WHO GUARDED THE PORTALS WATCHED HIM GO. HE HEADED FOR THE GUGGENHEIM OUT OF HABIT BUT FOUND HIMSELF INSTEAD WANDERING AIMLESSLY THROUGH CENTRAL PARK.

LET'S SEE. HE COULD SNEAK INTO THE PLANNING OFFICE AND BURN THE STATION BLUEPRINTS. NO, THAT WOULDN'T DO. THEY WERE BOUND TO HAVE PLENTY OF COPIES. CHARLIE HAD TO FILL OUT THREE COPIES OF A FORM HIMSELF JUST TO REQUESTION A BOX OF PAPER CLIPS.

HE COULD SNEAK INTO THE STATION SITE AND TRY AND SABOTAGE THE CONSTRUCTION MACHINERY. THAT WOULD DELAY THINGS FOR A WHILE, EXCEPT HE DIDN'T THINK HE KNEW ENOUGH ABOUT THE MACHINERY TO SUCCESSFULLY BUST ANY OF IT. HE'D NEVER BEEN VERY MECHANICALLY INCLINED. IN FACT HE'D FAILED HANDICRAFTS MISERABLY IN HIGH SCHOOL.

HOW ABOUT USING THE SITE TO STAGE A RALLY FOR THE ADMISSION OF NATIONALIST CHINA TO THE U.N.? THAT WAS ALWAYS SURE TO DRAW A NOISY, RAMBUNCTIOUS CROWD. THEY MIGHT EVEN SABOTAGE THE RALLY THEMSELVES! HE KNEW A FRIEND WHO WAS FAINTLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE JOHN BIRCH SOCIETY WHO MIGHT... NO, THAT WOULDN'T WORK. RIGHTIST RADICALS WOULD HARDLY BE THE GROUP TO GET TO TRY AND HALT THE CONSTRUCTION OF ANYTHING.

BESIDES, THEY WERE ALL ONLY TEMPORARY. DELAYING TACTICS. ALSO HE COULD GO TO JAIL FOR ANY ONE OF THEM, A PROSPECT WHICH ENTHRALLED HIM EVEN LESS THAN MISSING HIS REGULAR SUNDAY CALL TO HIS MOTHER IN GREENVILLE.



DINNER TIME ROLLED AROUND AND HE **STILL** HADN'T THOUGHT OF ANY THINGS. HE WAS REMINDED OF THE REAL WORLD BY THE SMELL OF INCINERATING VEAL CORDON BLEU. THE DELICATELY CARBONIZED ODFOR PERMEATED HIS TINY LIVING ROOM. THE UNAPPETIZING RESULT IN HIS STOVE WAS NOT CALCULATED TO IMPROVE HIS HUMOUR, ALREADY BUMPING ALONG AT A SEASONABLY **LOW EBB**.

WHAT HE DID WAS **MOST UNUSUAL**. FOR CHARLIE IT WAS **UNIQUE**. HE DUG DEE DOWN, DEEP, DEEF DEEF, INTO THE BOWELS OF HIS CLIPCARDS, PAST COUNTLESS CANS OF MR. PLANTER'S PEANUTS, DOWN PAST AN IMMACULATE COCKTAIL SHAKER, NEVER USED SINCE ITS PURCHASE THREE YEARS AGO, DOWN PAST THINGS BETTER LEFT UNMENTIONED, UNTIL HE FOUND A **HAIR OF THE DOG**.

NEVER MORE THAN A **SOCIAL DRINKER** (MOOSTLY AT OFFICIAL COMPANY FUNCTIONS), CHARLIE THOUGHT A FEW SIPS MIGHT CHARDEN HIS THOUGHTS. IT SEEMED TO WORK FOR OLD AGENT X-14 REGULARLY EVERY FRIDAY EVENING ON CHANNEL 3. SO HE SIPPED **DELICATELY** AND **CAREFULLY**. FOR VARIETY, HE ALTERNATED BOTTLES, THEY WERE **FRIENDLY DOGS** INDEED. WARM AND CUDDLY, LIKE A MALTESE. SHORTLY THEREAFTER THEY WERE RATHER MORE LIKE A COUPLE OF PLAYFUL **ST. BERNARDS**. AND VERY SHORTLY THEREAFTER THEREAFTER, HE WAS IN NO CONDITION TO ASPIRE TO ANY ANALOGIES AT ALL.

ACTUALLY HE HADN'T **INTENDED** TO GET DRUNK. IT WAS, HOWEVER, AN INEXCAPABLE BY-PRODUCT OF HIS DRINKING. HE RAN OUT OF SIP-PABLES IN WHAT SEEMED INDECENTLY SHORT ORDER.



HE THREW ON HIS RAINCOAT...IT WASN'T RAINING, BUT YOU NEVER KNEW, HE THOUGHT BELLIGERENTLY...AND HEADED IN SEARCH OF MORE FOLLICLES OF THE POOCH. IT WAS SHEER GOOD FORTUNE HE DIDN'T START FOR THE POUND.

ON THE WAY, HE HAD THE FORTUNE AND MISFORTUNE TO ENCOUNTER MISS OVERSHADE IN THE HALLWAY. MISS OVERSHADE OCCUPIED THE APARTMENT ACROSS THE HALL FROM CHARLIE, ON THE GOOD SIDE OF THE BUILDING. SHE WAS A LOCAL PERSONALITY OF SOME NOTE, BEING THE WEATHER LADY ON THE EARLY NEWS ON CHANNEL 8. SHE HAD AT ONE TIME BEEN VOTED 'MISS CONTINENTAL SHELF' BY THE PORT OF NEW YORK AUTHORITY AND CURRENTLY HELD THE TITLE 'MISS HIGH PRESSURE AREA' FROM THE NEW YORK COUNCIL OF METEOROLOGISTS.

IN POINT OF FACT, SHE ACTUALLY WAS CONSTRUCTED RATHER ALONG THE LINES OF AN ESPECIALLY ESTHETIC GATHERING OF CUMULUS CLOUDS. SHE NOTICED CHARLIE, SORT OF.

"GOOD EVENING, MISTER...UH, MISTER..."

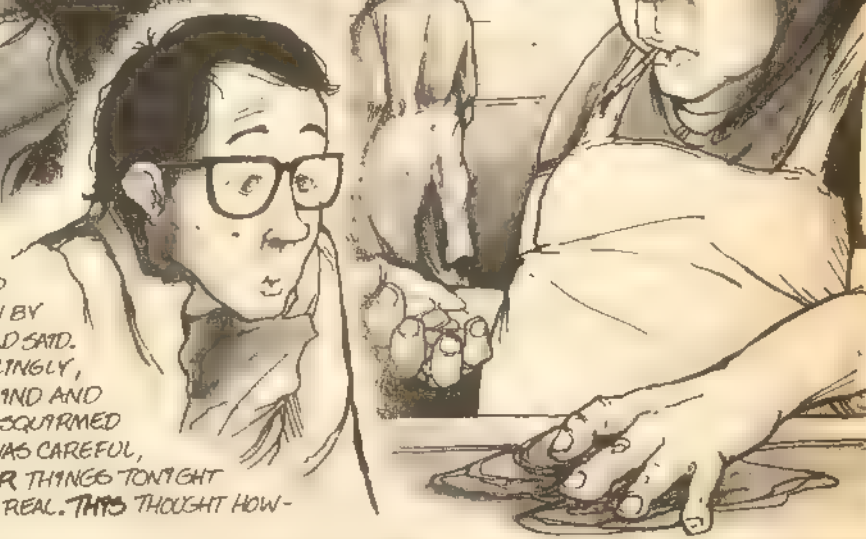
"DIMSDALE," MUMBLED CHARLIE. "DIMSDALE."

"OH YES! HOW ARE YOU, MISTER DIMSDALE!" WITHOUT PAUSING TO LEARN IF HE WAS ON THE BRINK OF A HORRIBLE DEATH, SHE VANISHED INTO HER APARTMENT. THAT VOICE WAS CALCULATED TO BRING ON THE MONSOON. FOR ALL SHE CARES, HE THOUGHT, I MIGHT AS WELL BE A... A GNOME.

HE HURRIED DOWN THE STAIRS, INSULTING THE ELEVATOR. AT SEVEN SHARP, CHARLIE WAS PERUSING THE SOLUBLE DELIGHTS OF AN AGED AND NOT-SO-VENERABLE ESTABLISHMENT KNOWN AS BIG SWACK'S BAR. CURRENTLY, HE EXISTED IN A STATE OF BLISSFUL INEBRIATION THAT FOLLOWED A THIN PATH BETWEEN NIRVANA AND HELL. FOR THE NONCE NIRVANA PREVAILLED.



C HARLIE HADA THOUGHT, GRAPPLED WITH IT. IT WAS BROUGHT ON BY SOMETHING VIN GREET HAD SAID. HE LOOKED AT IT HARD, PIERCINGLY, TURNING IT OVER IN HIS MIND AND SEARCHING FOR CRACKS. IT SQUIRMED TRYING TO GET AWAY. HE WAS CAREFUL, BECAUSE HE'D SEEN OTHER THINGS TONIGHT WHICH HADN'T BEEN AT ALL REAL. THIS THOUGHT HOWEVER, WAS.



HE LEFT SO FAST HE FORGOT TO COLLECT THE CHANGE FROM HIS LAST DRINK. AN OCCASION WHICH SO ASTONISHED THE PROPRIETOR, 'BIG SWACK' (WHOSE REAL NAME WAS HOCHMEISTER), THAT HE TALKED OF NOTHING ELSE FOR DAYS AFTERWARDS.



ONEON, JONSON! BILL JONSON! CHARLIE HAMMERED UNVELOD-ICALLY ON THE DOOR.

BILL JONSON WAS A SANDY-HAIRED, RATHER SANDY-FACED YOUNG GEOLOGIST WHO OCCASIONALLY SHARED WITH CHARLIE A PALLID SANDWICH IN THE EQUALLY PALLID SUBWAY AUTHORITY

CAFETERIA. HE DID NOT NEED MINUTES TO OBSERVE THAT HIS FRIEND WAS NOT HIS USUAL BLAND SELF.

"CHARLIE? WHAT THE HELL'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?"

NOW CHARLIE WAS SOMEWHAT COHERENT BECAUSE ON THE WAY UP TO HIS FRIEND'S ABODE HE'D HAD ENOUGH SENSE TO INGEST **THREE SOBER-**



UPS, THESE WERE CHASED DOWNSTREAM CONSECUTIVELY BY WATER, HALF A PEPER, AND AN ORANGE DRINK OF SUFFICIENT SWEETNESS TO DESTROY ANY SELF-RESPECTING MOLAR INSIDE OF A MONTH. AS A RESULT HIS MIND CLEARED AT THE EXPENSE OF HIS STOMACH, WHICH WAS STARTING TO CLOUD OVER.

"LISTEN, BILL! CAN YOU TAKE A... A SOUNDING, A READING, A... YOU KNOW, TO DETERMINE IF THERE'S SOMETHING SPECIAL IN THE GROUND? LIKE A **BIG HOLLOW PLACE?**"

"I SUSPECT A BIG HOLLOW PLACE AND IT'S NOT IN THE GROUND. COME BACK TOMORROW MAYBE, CHARLIE, HUH? I'VE GOT COMPANY, YOU KNOW? HE SORT OF TRIED A HALF-GRIN, HALF BLINK. IT MADE HIM LOOK LIKE A MAN SUFFERING FROM AN ATTACK OF THE GALLOPING GRIPES.

"BILL, YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE THIS SOUNDING! YOU CAN TAKE ONE? I'VE HEARD YOU MENTION IT BEFORE. PAY ATTENTION!... **HTC!**... MAN! THIS IS IMPORTANT! THINK OF THE TELEPHONE COMPANY!"

"I'D RATHER NOT. I GOT MY BILL TWO DAYS AGO. NOW BE A GOOD CHAP, CHARLIE, AND RUN ALONG. IT CAN WAIT TILL MONDAY. AND I HAVE GOT COMPANY."

CHARLIE WAS DESPERATE. "JUST ANSWER ME. CAN YOU TAKE A SOUNDING?"

"YOU MEAN TEST THE **SUBSTRATA**, LIKE I DO FOR THE SUBWAY AUTHORITY?"

"**YEAH! THAT!**" CHARLIE DANCED AROUND EXCITEDLY. THIS DID NOT INSPIRE BILL TO LOOK ON HIS FRIEND WITH FAVOR.

"YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE ONE FOR ME!"

"A **READING?** YOU'RE DRUNK!"

"**CERTAINLY NOT!**"

"THEN WHY ARE YOU LEANING TO THE LEFT LIKE THAT?"

"I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A LIBERAL. LISTEN, YOU KNOW THE NEW STATION THEY'RE PLANNING TO BUILD FOR THE EXTENDED BRONX-MANHATTAN LINE? THE ONE AT 6TH AND 16TH?"

"I'VE HEARD ABOUT IT. THAT'S MORE YOUR DEPARTMENT THAN MINE, YOU KNOW."

"INDIRECTLY. YOU'VE GOT TO COME DOWN AND TAKE A READING THERE. NOW, **TONIGHT!** I'VE REASON TO SUSPECT THAT THE GROUND THERE IS UNSTABLE."

"YOU ARE **CRAZY**. THERE'S NO REAL UNSTABLE GROUND IN MANHATTAN, UNLESS YOU COUNT SOME OF THE BARS IN THE VILLAGE. IT'S PRACTICALLY SOLID GRANITE. DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT TIME IT IS ANYWAY?" HE LOOKED POINTEDLY AT HIS WATCH, "MY GOD, IT'S NEARLY 8:30!"

THIS UNSUBTLE HINT DID NOT HAVE THE INTENDED EFFECT ON CHARLIE.

"MY GOD," HE ECHOED, LOOKING IN THE GENERAL DIRECTION OF HIS OWN TIME PIECE, "IT'S NEARLY 8:30! WE'VE GOT TO HURRY! WE'VE ONLY GOT 'TIL TWELVE!"

"I'M BEGINNING TO THINK YOU'VE GOT EVEN LESS THAN THAT," SAID BILL.

"WHO DOES?," CAME A MELLIFLOUS VOICE FROM BEHIND THE DOOR.

"WHO'S THAT?," CHARLIE ASKED, TRYING TO PEER OVER HIS FRIEND'S SHOULDER.

"THE TELEVISION. NOW LOOK, GO ON HOME AND I'LL DO WHATEVER YOU ASK... MONDAY, HUH? PLEASE?"

"NONSENSE, BILL." SAID THE VOICE. THE DOOR OPENED WIDER. A YOUNG LADY IN RATHER TIGHT SLACKS AND SWEATER CAME INTO VIEW BEHIND BILL. "WHY DON'T YOU INVITE YOUR FRIEND IN? CHARLIE, WASN'T IT?"

"STILL IS," SAID CHARLIE.

"I CAN'T THINK OF A SINGLE REASON," SAID BILL IN A TONE THAT WOULD SUFFICE TO TAN LEATHER. HE OPENED THE DOOR WITH GREAT RELUCTANCE AND CHARLIE SLIPPED INSIDE.

"HI. MY NAME'S ABIGAIL." THE GIRL CHIRPED.

"ABIGAIL?" SAID CHARLIE IN DISBELIEF.

"ABIGAIL," REPLIED BILL NODDING SLOWLY.

"MY NAME'S CHARLIE." SAID CHARLIE.

"I KNOW."

"YOU DO? HAVE WE MET BEFORE?"

"GET TO THE POINT," SAID BILL.

"ABIGAIL, YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME. I MUST ENLIST BILL'S INEXHAUSTIBLE FOUNT OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE. IN AN ENTERPRISE THAT IS VITAL TO THE SAFETY OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK!" ABIGAIL'S EYES WENT WIDE. BILL'S GOT HARD, LIKE DUM DUM BULLETS.

"I HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE," CHARLIE CONTINUED CONSPIRATORIALLY, "THAT THE GROUND AT 6TH AVENUE AND 16TH STREET IS UNSTABLE. IF THIS IS NOT PROVEN TONIGHT LIVES WILL BE ENDANGERED! BUT I MUST BUTTRESS MY THEORY WITH FACT."

"DON'T SWEAR. GEE, THAT'S FANTASTIC! ISN'T THAT FANTASTIC, BILL?"

"IT SURE IS," BILL REPLIED. IN A MINUTE HE WOULD FANTASIZE HER FURTHER BY STRANGLING HIS OWN FRIEND RIGHT BEFORE HER FANTASIZED EYES.

CHARLIE BEGAN TO PROWL AROUND THE LIVING ROOM, HIS OWN OCULARS DARTING RIGHT TO LEFT. "WELL, DON'T JUST STAND THERE, BILL! WE'VE GOT TO ASSEMBLE YOUR EQUIPMENT. NOW. DON'T YOU AGREE, ABIGAIL?"

"OH YES. HURRY BILL, LET'S DO!"

"YES." MURMURED BILL TIGHTLY. "JUST LET ME GET MY HAT AND COAT." HE TOOK ANOTHER LOOK AT HIS FRIEND. "IS IT RAINING OUT?"

CHARLIE WAS ON HANDS AND KNEES, PEERING UNDER THE COUCH. "RAINING OUT? DON'T BE ABSURD! OF COURSE IT ISN'T RAINING OUT! WHAT MAKES YOU THINK IT'S RAINING OUT?"

"NOTHING," SAID BILL. "I CAN'T IMAGINE WHERE I GOT THE IDEA."





BOYD COTTLE, COMMANDER STILL SOUNDS FUNNY EVERYONE ON BOARD IS AT LEAST AS NERVOUS AS I AM. THAT IS ONLY TO BE EXPECTED

I HAVE ASSIGNED ADDITIONAL WORK, BELIEVING THAT TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN CALMING POST IGNITION JITTERS THAN A CASUAL DOSE OF COGRAPHINE.



AS I MENTIONED, ALL SHIP'S FUNCTIONS ARE OPERATING WITHIN 99.8% OF PRESCRIBED PARAMETERS. EVA ØSTERSUND AND I TRACED THE TWO-TENTHS ERROR TO A MINOR MALFUNCTION IN THE SOLID WASTE RECYCLING CHAMBER. THIS IS A SMALL PROBLEM BUT IT HAS DENTED MOUTIERS' PROFESSIONAL PRIDE.

DR. OYO IS HELPING HIM WITH THE MATTER AS BEST SHE CAN WITHOUT NEGLECTING HER JOB, WHICH IS PRIMARILY TO KEEP A WARY EYE ON US FIRST DEEP-SPACE TRAVELERS. WE'RE ALL DISGUSTINGLY HEALTHY, SHE INSISTS PHYSICAL FITNESS WAS AS IMPORTANT A CRITERION IN OUR SELECTION AS ANY MENTAL ABILITIES.



ONLY SIXTEEN YEARS, FOUR MONTHS, TWO DAYS TO BARNARD'S STAR... UNLESS THE MOLENOW MULTIPLIER REALLY WORKS. WE'RE NOT OVERLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THAT. HOW AN ALIEN DEVICE ADAPTED FOR HUMAN USE WILL HELP IS BEYOND US. THE EXPERTS CLAIM THAT THE MULTIPLIER REACTS TO MENTAL CUT PUT, TRANSLATING THAT INTO SPACE-TIME DISTORTION LEAPS ALONG OUR LINE OF FLIGHT, BUT EVEN THEY DON'T FULLY UNDERSTAND HOW IT FUNCTIONS. ON DAY TWELVE SESE OYO WILL CONDUCT OUR FIRST "SESSION". BELIEVE ME, THE THOUGHT OF SIX TRAINED SCIENTISTS SQUATTING AROUND MUTTERING "OMS" AT BARNARD'S STAR IS MORE THAN A LITTLE JARRING.

DAY
CC3

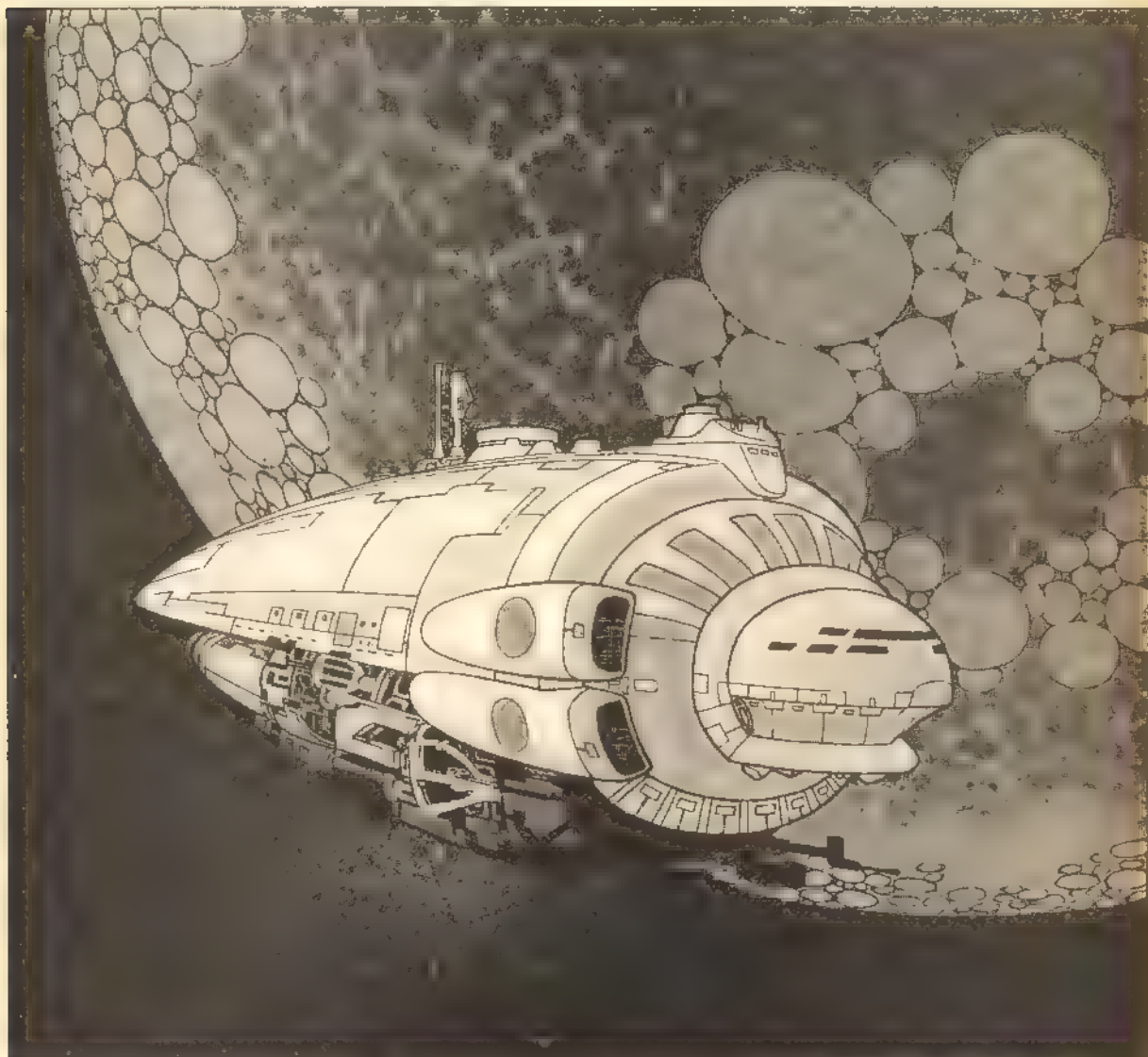


SMOOTH AS VACUUM SO FAR.
MOUTIERS HAS CORRECTED THE
PROBLEM WITH THE SOLID WASTE
RECYCLER. HE'S NOW FIDDLING

HAPPILY WITH HIS HYDROPONICS
HE FIGURES HE HAS THIRTY-TWO
YEARS IN WHICH TO CREATE A
BETTER CANTALOUPE.
KIM RAHMAN PURRS OVER HER
ENGINES WHICH PURR BACK AT HER
OUR RESIDENT STAR-GAZER
PAUL LISAKOS, CAN'T WAIT UNTIL
WE LEAVE THE SOLAR SYSTEM.

ASTROGATOR ØSTERSLUND FOUND A
MINUTE COURSE DEVIATION - NOT
UNEXPECTED THIS EARLY IN OUR
VOYAGE. SHE AND RAHMAN WILL
COLLABORATE ON CORRECTION.

THANK BARSOOM FOR THE CITY
LIGHTS MESSAGE. YES WE ARE "GO"
ASSURE THEM, WITH ALL OF OUR
THANKS.



DAY
CC7



ACCOMPLISHED URANUS PASSBY
AND BEAMED THEM RECORDS AND
MESSAGES; OUR LAST CLOSE
CONTACT WITH CIVILIZATION...

NOW WE ARE TRULY OUTWARD
BOUND.

THE SECOND JUMP IS PERFORM-
ING ABOVE ALL EXPECTATIONS

THRUST

DAY
012



WE JUST CONCLUDED OUR INITIAL SESSION UNDER DR. OYO'S GUIDANCE. THE OVER ALL REACTION SEEMED TO BE ONE OF EMBARRASSMENT. DR. OYO

SAYS THAT REPETITION WILL CLIRE THIS, BUT I'M NOT SO SURE.



DELATED BIRTHDAY GREETINGS FROM KIM RAHMAN TO HER FATHER DOWN IN KUALA LAMPUR. BY THE TIME THIS MESSAGE REACHES HIM HE'LL BE OLDER. RECEIVED BIRTHDAY WISHES

FROM MR. AND MRS. USAKOS FOR PAUL. HE RETURNS THE GREETINGS AND SAYS FOR HIS DAD TO TELL EVERYONE ON THE RUGBY TEAM THAT HE WON'T BE BACK IN TIME

FOR THE PLAYOFFS, BUT THAT HE'LL BE BACK TO COACH THEIR KIDS FOR SURE.



OH, BY THE WAY, THE MOLENON MULTIPLIER WORKS. ØSTERSUND INFORMS ME THAT OUR SPEED HAS INCREASED BY A FACTOR OF...WELL, CHECK THE READOUTS WE'RE BEAM-

ING BACK TO YOU. WHAT IT MEANS IS THAT THIS WONDERFULLY COMPLEX, ALTERED, ALIEN GIZMO YOU'VE HAD US TRUCK PAST PLUTO WILL GET US TO BARNARD'S STAR EXACTLY TWO

HOURS, FOUR MINUTES EARLIER THAN PREDICTED. SO MUCH FOR THE "GIFT OF THE ALIENS."

DR. OYO SAYS WE CAN DO MUCH BETTER AT OUR SESSIONS. SURE WE CAN.

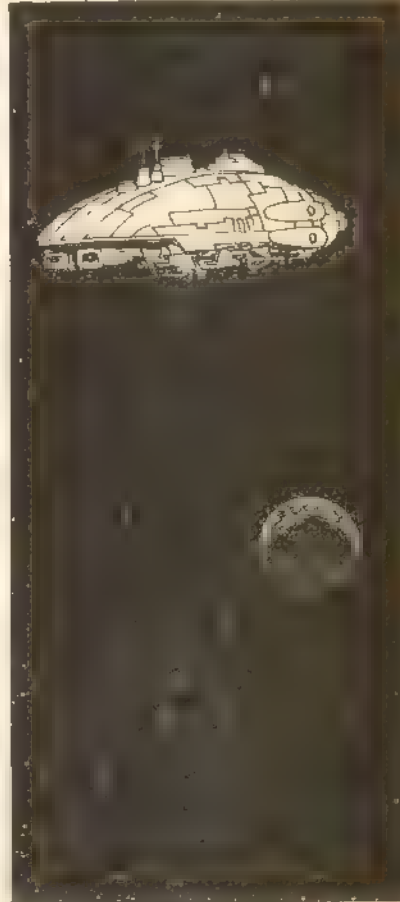
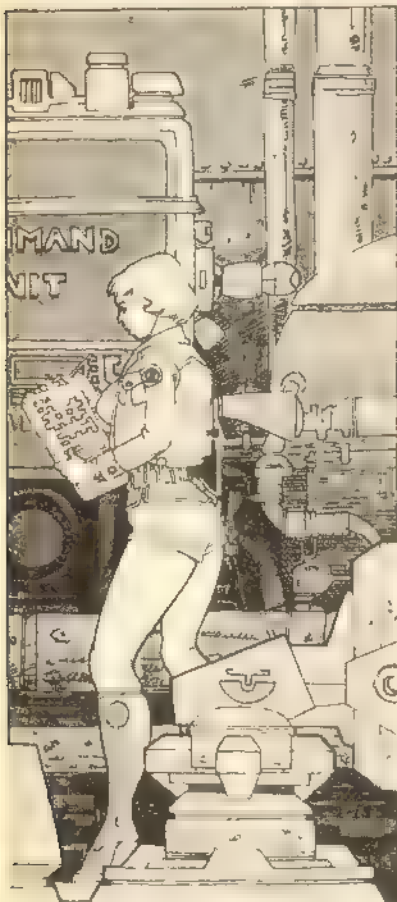
DAY 019

08:27

DR OYO SAYS THAT OUR GROWING BOREDOM IS TO BE EXPECTED, IT WILL PASS AS WE SETTLE MORE

FULLY INTO IN-FLIGHT ROUTINE. I HAVE TO CONFESS THAT I'M A BIT WORRIED. ALL OF THE WORK AND GAMES THAT ARE AVAILABLE SEEM INADEQUATE TO RELIEVE THE PRESENT DISENCHANTMENT. THERE'VE BEEN NO OUTWARD SIGNS OF DISCONTENT. WE'RE ALL

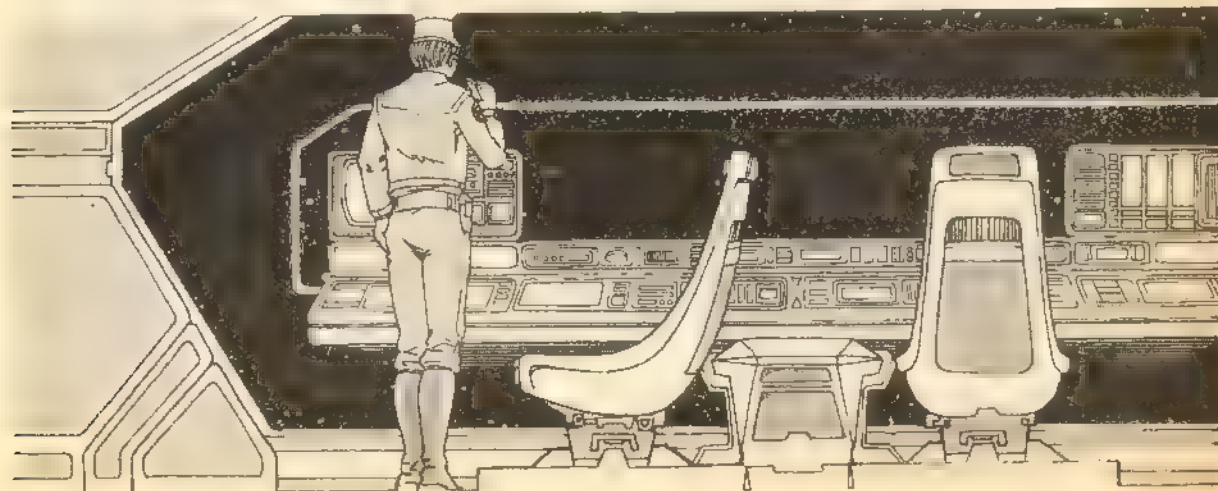
TOO MENTALLY STABLE FOR THAT, BUT I CAN TELL WHEN SOMEONE IS ENJOYING THEMSELF, AND WHEN THEY'RE JUST GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS. EVEN K.M. RAHMAN'S JEWELRY AND SCULPTURE IS SUFFERING. PAUL IS TRYING TO HELP INSPIRE HER



ANOTHER SESSION TODAY DR.OYO SOUNDED PLEASED ØSTERSJØND DISCOVERED ANOTHER SLIGHT JUMP IN OUR POSITION. WE'LL NOW ARRIVE AT OUR DESTINATION THREE DAYS,SIX

HOURS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE. I'M NOT IMPRESSED. IF THE MULTIPLIER CAN'T DO BETTER THAN SHAVE THREE DAYS OFF A SIXTEEN YEAR TRIP, I PERSONALLY DON'T HOLD

MUCH HOPE FOR ITS FUTURE BENEFITS TO MANKIND IN REGARDS TO INTERSTELLAR TRAVEL.



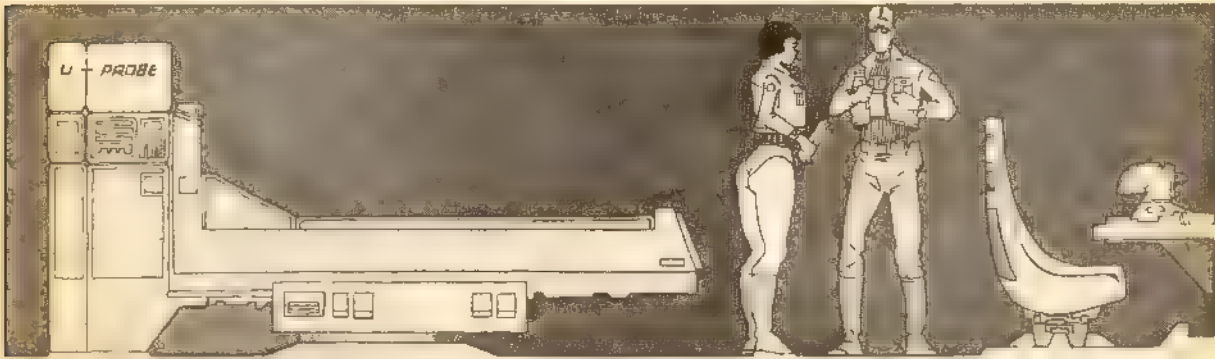
DAY
C33

06:44

IT APPEARS WE HAVE TO DEVOTE

MORE AND MORE TIME TO SIMPLY STAYING SANE. AS EVER, THE SECOND JUMP RUNS LIKE A FINE TIME PIECE. MANKIND CAN BE PROUD OF THIS SHIP. WILL THEY BE ABLE TO BE AS PROUD OF US?

I AM TROUBLED BY UNPLEASANT PROSPECTS. DR. OYO ASCRIBES MY WORRY TO MY POSITION AS COMMANDER; MY BURDEN OF RESPONSIBILITY.



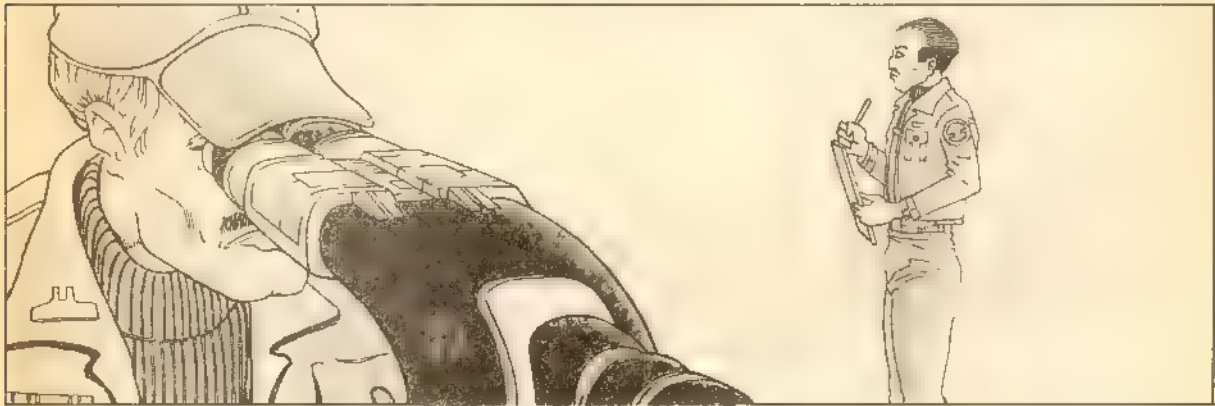
DAY
C45

22:35

MOUTIERS HAS DISCOVERED MINUTE TRACES OF A COMPLEX PROTEIN CHAIN WHICH SHOULDN'T

BE IN OUR FOOD. HE'S PERSONALLY UNFAMILIAR WITH THE CHAIN AND HAS NO RECORD OF IT IN THE CHEMICAL LOG. IT'S THIS LACK OF A RECORD WHICH TROUBLES HIM. HE'S ASSURED ME THAT THE PROTEINS ARE HARMLESS AND MAY EVEN BE A BENIGN ADDITIVE

WHICH SOMEONE NEGLECTED TO LIST IN THE LOG OR COMPUTER. AS HE WAS POSITIVE THE PROTEINS WEREN'T HARMFUL I TOLD HIM NOT TO WORRY AND SUGGESTED HE TRY TO IDENTIFY THE STUFF IN HIS SPARE TIME. IF NOTHING ELSE IT WILL GIVE HIM SOMETHING TO DO.



DAY
C55

08:48

I WENT TO ASK MOUTIERS ABOUT THE

MYSTERIOUS PROTEIN HE DISCOVERED TEN DAYS AGO. HE WAS NOT AT HIS STATION. I EXPECTED TO FIND HIM IN THE HYDROPONICS CHAMBERS WHICH I DID. BOTH HE AND KIM RAHMAN. I BACKED OUT QUIETLY.

NATURALLY I HAD NO OBJECTION TO MOUTIERS AND RAHMAN ENJOYING THEMSELVES. NO ONE EXPECTED THIS CREW OF YOUNG, HEALTHY GENIUSES WOULD REMAIN CELIBATE FOR THIRTY-TWO YEARS.



DAY 062



PROF. RAHMAN AND MOUTIERS ARE NEGLECTING THEIR ASSIGNMENTS REGULARLY NOW. THEY'RE SPENDING ALMOST ALL THEIR

NON-ESSENTIAL TIME IN ONE ANOTHER'S CABIN. RAHMAN HAS BEEN USING HER PERSONAL SCULPTING AND JEWELRY-MAKING EQUIPMENT TO FASHION OBJECTS OF A NATURE I PREFER NOT TO DISCUSS AT THIS TIME.

I WAS DEEPLY TROUBLED AT THIS FIRST ACTUAL BREAK IN

DISCIPLINE, AND ARRANGED ANOTHER PRIVATE SESSION WITH DR. OYO. SHE REASSURED AND RELAXED ME, AS SHE ALWAYS DOES. WHY WORRY SO LONG AS THE SHIP WAS OPERATING EFFICIENTLY? AT LEAST THE BOREDOM OF TWO CREWMEMBERS HAD BEEN ALLEVIATED.



DAY 064



PAUL USAKOS, OUR ASTRONOMER, IS DISCUSSING ASTROGATION

WITH EVA ØSTERSUND. HAS BEEN FOR SOME TIME, IT NOW SEEMS. WHILE THE SECOND JUMP SHOWS NO ILL EFFECTS FROM THEIR NEGLECT, THE ABSENCE OF CONSTANT MONITORING OF COURSE AND SPEED CONCERNS

ME. I HAVE BEEN TRYING TO COMPENSATE QUIETLY BY TAKING OVER SOME OF ØSTERSUND'S AND USAKOS' FUNCTIONS.

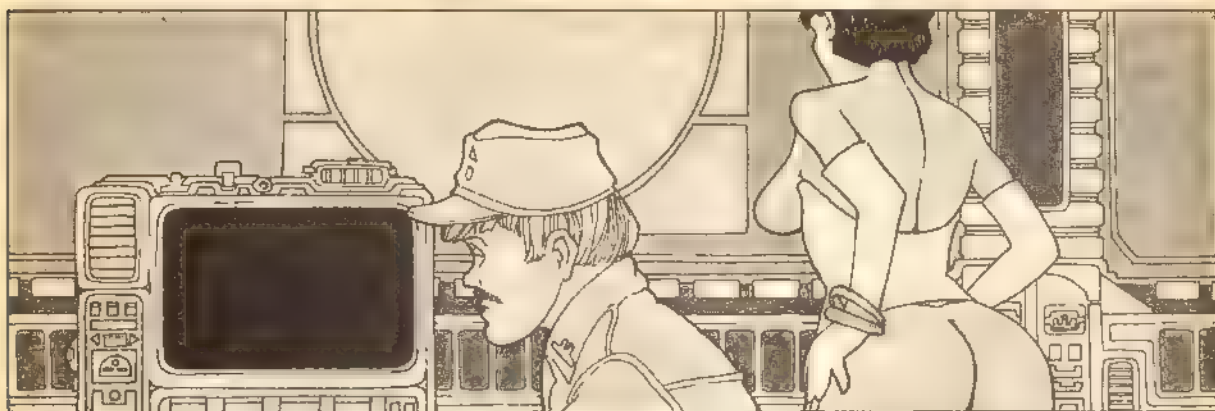
THE OVERWORK HAS DR. OYO WORRYING ABOUT ME.



ANOTHER SESSION WITH HER
YESTERDAY. SHE IS A CONSUMMATE
PROFESSIONAL AND WE ARE

FORTUNATE TO HAVE HER ON
BOARD. IT IS BECOMING
INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT FOR ME

TO IGNORE THE FACT THAT FOR
SOMEONE WITH THREE ADVANCED
DEGREES, DR. OYO IS REALLY BUILT.



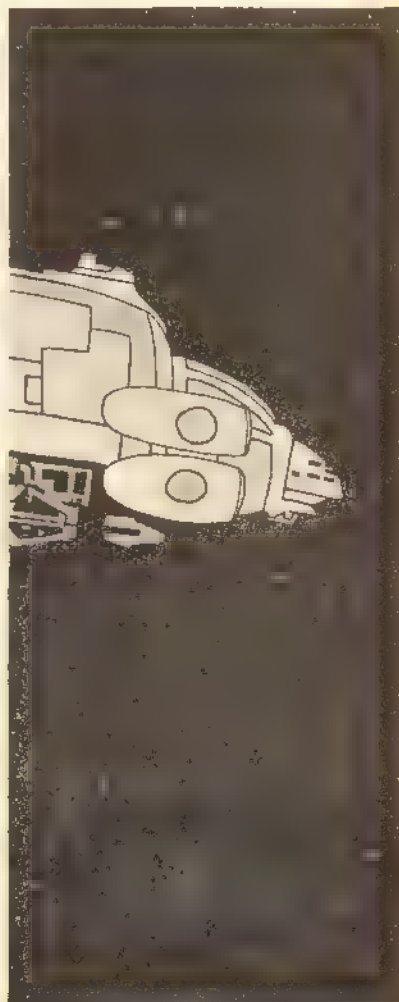
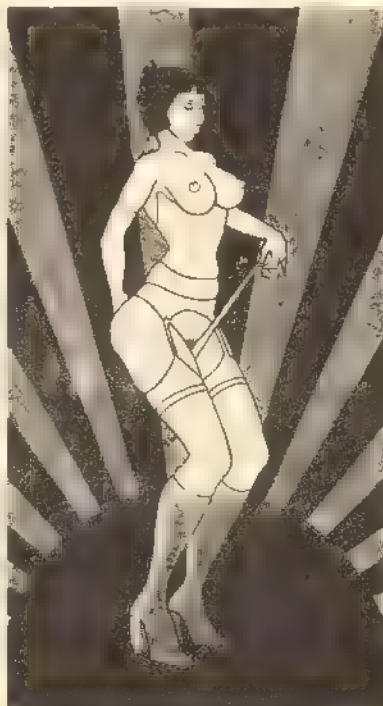
DAY
068



THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH

THE SHIP, BUT NOONE SEEMS TO
CARE. ØSTERSUND MUMBLED
SOMETHING ABOUT UNEXPECTED
DISTORTION OF THE STELLAR
MATRIX, BUT SHE WASN'T
PARTICULARLY COHERENT. I DID

ATTEMPT TO DISCOVER THE
NATURE OF THE DISTORTION BUT
BEFORE I COULD BEGIN I WAS
INTERRUPTED BY DR. OYO.



I AM DISTURBED AT THE APPARENT
COLLAPSE OF SHIP ROUTINE, BUT
THE SECOND JUMP IGNORES US. IT

CONTINUES PLACIDLY ON ITS
ASSIGNED COURSE. I CONFESS
DR. OYO'S INTERRUPTION WAS NOT

WHOLELY UNWELCOME. SESE
ALWAYS KNOWS HOW TO MAKE ME
FEEL BETTER.

DAY
C73

02:01

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG WHILE WE HAD ANOTHER GROUP SESSION. THIS TIME IT DID NOT INVOLVE MEDITATION. ALL SIGNS OF MOROSENESS AND BOREDOM HAVE VANISHED. I FEEL MYSELF SLIPPING FURTHER FROM REALITY.



DAY
C80

00:10

JEAN-JACQUES HAS DISCOVERED A HOST OF NEW PROTEINS NOT LISTED IN HIS CATALOG FROM TIME TO TIME HE AND I WONDER ABOUT THEIR PRESENCE IN A BASAL FOOD SUPPLY AS CAREFULLY COMPOSED AS THE SECONDJUMPS.



DAY
C83

11:04

EVA ØSTERSUND AND PAUL USAKOS ARE TWO-THIRDS OF THE WAY THROUGH A DRAMATIC VERSION OF THE KAMA SUTRA. THE REST OF US ARE INVENTING SOME TRICKS OF OUR OWN, AND HAVING A GREAT TIME!



DAY
C84

04:44

DAY
C85

02:10

OH, WOW!

TURNED OFF THE CENTRIFUGE YESTERDAY WE'RE ALL ENJOYING FREE-FALL, BUT I DON'T THINK OUR MUSCLE TONE WILL SUFFER. ZERO GRAVITY PERMITS VARIATIONS SIR

RICHARD BURTON COULD NEVER HAVE ENVISIONED. NIM RAHMAN IS PRODUCING SOME REMARKABLE DEVICES IN HER WORKSHOP.

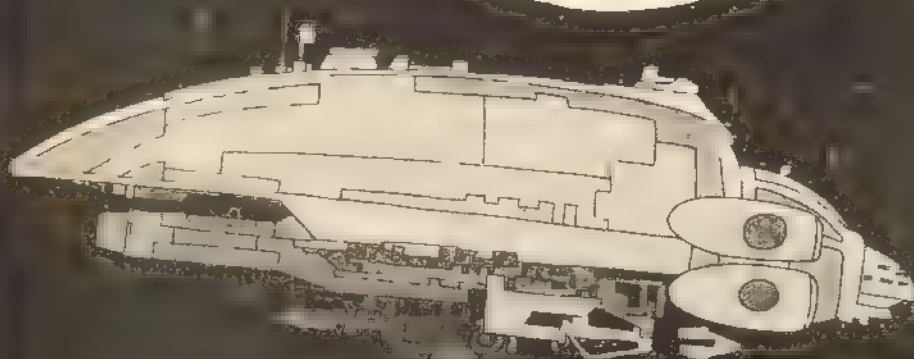
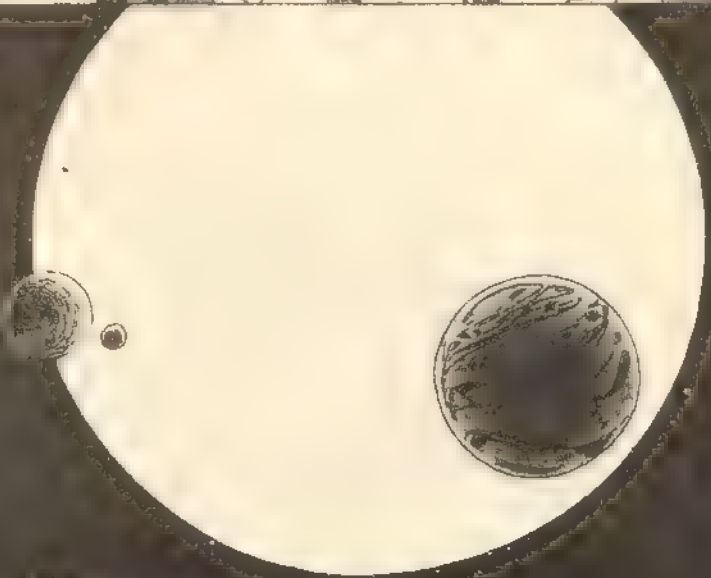


DAY
091



I CAN'T EXPLAIN IT. NONE OF US CAN.
THE SECOND JUMP HAS STOPPED.
THERE IS A SUN BLAZING OUTSIDE
WHICH CAN ONLY BE BARNARD'S
STAR. THIS DISCOVERY WAS EXTRA-

ORDINARY ENOUGH TO INDUCE US TO
RETURN TO OUR STATIONS.
NO QUESTION ABOUT IT, WE'VE
REACHED BARNARD'S STAR. THERE
ARE SIX PLANETS NOTED ON FIRST



SURVEY, AND TWO. TWO OF THEM
ARE EARTH LIKE. THERE IS ALSO A
CHANCE, PAUL TELLS ME, THAT THE
SIXTH MOON OF THE FIFTH PLANET IS
MARGINALLY HABITABLE. THIS

EXCEEDS THE WILDEST HOPES OF
EVERY ONE OF US, AND I'M SURE OF
EVERYONE BACK ON EARTH. WE ARE
SIXTEEN YEARS, ONE MONTH
AHEAD OF SCHEDULE ... ALL WE

CAN ASSUME IS THAT THE MOLENDON
MULTIPLIER WORKS LIKE NOBODY'S
BUSINESS. MY APOLOGIES TO ALL
CONCERNED WITH THAT PART OF
THE PROJECT.

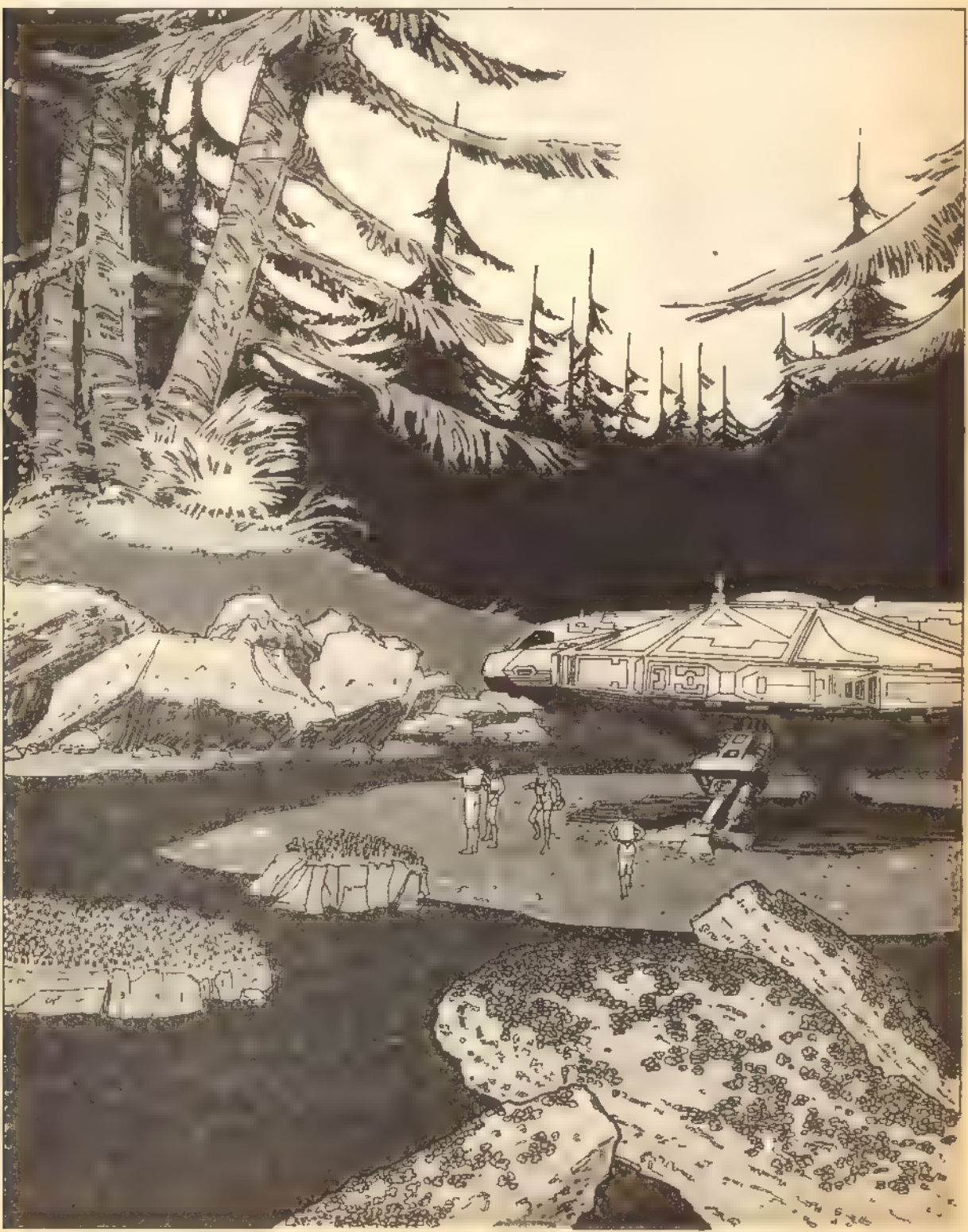
DAY 093



JEAN JACQUES, KIM, PAUL AND SESE HAVE TAKEN THE LANDER DOWN TO THE SURFACE OF BARNARD III, WHICH WE HAVE

NAMED AFTER JEAN-JACQUES' SUGGESTION, LA DIFFÉRENCE LET THE HISTORIANS HAVE THAT ONE TO CHEW ON IN YEARS TO COME. LA DIFFÉRENCE, BY THE WAY, IS MORE THAN NINE TENTHS EARTH-LIKE IT HAS A SLIGHTLY HIGHER GRAVITY, BUT OTHERWISE IS A PARADISE ACCORDING TO REPORTS

FROM BELOW NO LIFE HIGHER THAN THE LOWER INVERTEBRATES EVA AND I HAVE BEEN WORKING THE COMPUTER OVERTIME TRYING TO DISCOVER THE REASON FOR THE INCREDIBLE, SUDDEN SUCCESS OF THE MOLENOON MULTIPLE. I BELIEVE WE HAVE FOUND THE ANSWER.



JEAN-JACQUES AND SESE HAVE BROUGHT THE LANDER UP TO DISGORGE SPECIMENS AND TAKE ON FRESH SUPPLIES. JEAN-JACQUES TOOK A COUPLE OF

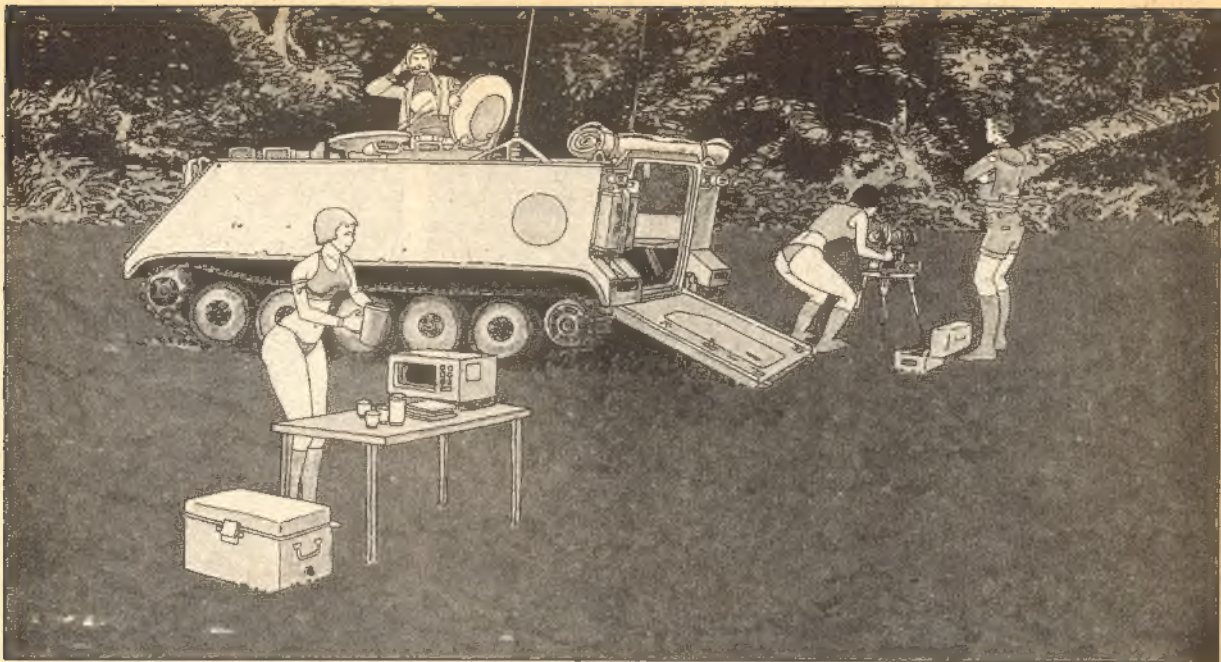
HOURS AND FINALLY IDENTIFIED THOSE MYSTERIOUS PROTEINS - A RELATIVELY SIMPLE JOB NOW THAT HE HAD AN IDEA OF WHAT TO LOOK FOR.



REALLY I DON'T THINK ALL THOSE PHEROMES AND APHRODISIACS WERE NECESSARY. SESE THOUGHT THAT IF WE'D BEEN TOLD THAT THE BEST THEORETICAL WAY TO OPERATE THE

MULTIPLIER WAS TO, UH, TRY AND MULTIPLY - OUR INHIBITIONS MIGHT HAVE FINISHED US BEFORE WE GOT STARTED. UNDISTORTED MENTAL OUTPUT ENGAGES THE SPACE-TIME

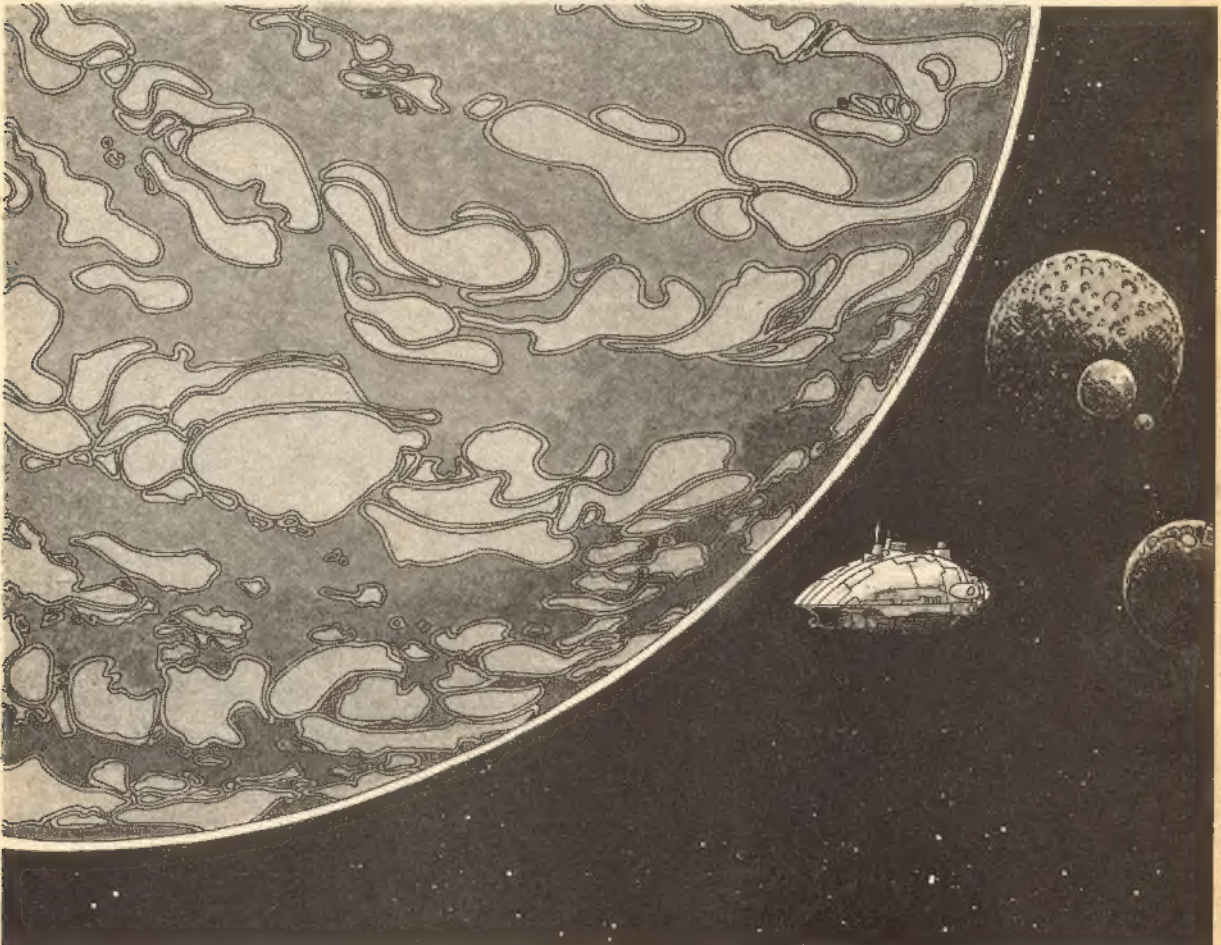
DISTORTION FUNCTIONING OF THE MOLE NON MULTIPLIER. THAT OUTPUT PEAKS DURING THE ACT OF SEX. SCORE ONE FOR THE BRAIN BOYS BACK HOME. BUT I'M STILL NOT SURE I LIKE HAVING BEEN TRICKED INTO IT.



THIS WOULD ALL BE FUNNY IF IT WEREN'T SO WONDERFULLY EFFICIENT. BARNARD IX IS ALSO INHABITABLE. I WILL NOT TELL YOU WHAT EVA AND I NAMED IT, BUT THE REST OF THE CREW CONCURRED.

I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING HOW THE MEDIA COPE WITH IT. GENTLEMEN, THIS IS A HELL OF A WAY TO RUN A STARSHIP. WE'LL BE RETURNING HOME SHORTLY, AS SOON AS WE'VE THOROUGHLY

FINISHED OUR EXPLORATION HERE. PAUL WILL PLAY RUGBY AGAIN AFTER ALL ... THE REST OF US ARE GOING TO DO OUR DAMDEST TO GET HIM HOME IN TIME FOR THE PLAYOFFS ...



NOVELS, & NOVELIZATIONS COLLECTIONS

The Tar-Aiym Krang	Ballantine books, 1972
Bloodhype	Ballantine books, 1973
Icerigger	Ballantine books, 1974
Luana	Ballantine books, 1974
Dark Star	Ballantine books, 1974
Star Trek Log One	Ballantine books, 1974
Star Trek Log Two	Ballantine books, 1974
Star Trek Log Three	Ballantine books, 1975
Star Trek Log Four	Ballantine books, 1975
Star Trek Log Five	Ballantine books, 1975
Midworld	Science-fiction book club, 1975
	Ballantine books, 1976
Star Trek Log Six	Ballantine books, 1976
Star Trek Log Seven	Ballantine books, 1976
Star Trek Log Eight	Ballantine books, 1976
Star Trek Log Nine	Ballantine books, 1977
Orphan Star	Ballantine books, 1977
The End of the Matter	Del Rey books, 1977
With Friends Like These	Del Rey books, 1977
	(collection)
Star Trek Log Ten	Del Rey books, 1978
Splinter of the Mind's Eye	Del Rey books, 1978
	Science-Fiction book club, 1978
Mission to Moulokin	Science Fiction
	book club, 1979
	Del Rey books, 1979
Alien	Warner books, 1979
Cachalot	Del Rey books, 1979

SHORT FICTION

- With Friends Like These; Analog June 1971—
The 1972 Annual World's Best SF, ed.
Wollheim
- Some Notes Concerning a Green Box; The Arkham
Collector, Summer 1971
- Why Johnny Can't Speed; Galaxy, September 1971
- The Emoman; Worlds of IF, October 1972

- Space Opera; Adam, February 1973
- Pipe Dream; Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine,
September 1973—Alfred Hitchcock Presents:
Stories to be read with the door locked,
Random House, 1975
- The Empire of T'ang Lang; The Alien Condition
(anth., ed. Goldin) Ballantine Books, 1973
- A Miracle of Small Fishes; Stellar 1 (anth., ed.
delRey), Ballantine Books 1974
- Dream Done Green; Fellowship of the Stars
(anth., ed. Carr), Simon & Schuster, 1974—
Best Science Fiction Stories of the Year
(anth., ed. delRey), Dutton, 1975
- HE: Fantasy & Science Fiction, June 1976
- Wolfstroker (abridged version); COQ, March 1974
- Swamp Planet Christmas; Art & Story #2,
August 1976
- Polonaise; Beyond Time (anth., ed. Ley),
Pocket Books, 1976
- Ye Who Would Sing; Galileo #2, December 1976
- WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE, anthology,
Ballantine/Del Rey, 1977. contains all the
above except Swamp Planet Xmas &
Pipe Dream.
- Snake Eyes; Stellar 4 (anth., ed. delRey), DelRey
books, June 1978
- The Chair; Shadows 2 (anth., ed. C. Grant),
Doubleday
- Bystander; Issac Asimov's Adventure Mag.,
Summer 78, issue #1.

AUDIOVISUAL WORKS

- Twelve short radio plays, scenes from American
History; Audio Bi-j Inc., Sweet Home Oregon,
1973
- Star Trek record, original scripts, Passage to
Moauv, In Vino Verita, The Crier in Emptiness;
Power Records, 1975
- Star Trek record, original scripts, To Starve a
Fleaver, The Logistics of Stampede, A Mirror
for Futility; Power Records 1976
- STAR STREK—THE MOTION PICTURE; Original
story treatment, 1978

